TURKEY CASE STUDY - PART 1 SECTION 1

From Ottoman Empire to Turkish Republic (1299-2025)

Foundation and Elite Formation (1299-1650)

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TURKEY CASE STUDY - PART 1 SECTION 1 1
From Ottoman Empire to Turkish Republic (1299-2025) 1
PROLOGUE: A LETTER FROM THE PALACE SCHOOL 4
I. FOUNDATION CONDITIONS: THE OTTOMAN EMERGENCE (1299-1453) 5
II. LABOR SYSTEMS: SLAVERY AS ELITE FORMATION 10
III. CAPITAL AND RESOURCE CONTROL: THE LIMITS OF ACCUMULATION 15
IV. ELITE COORDINATION: THE MECHANISMS OF CONTROL 19
TURKEY CASE STUDY - PART 1 SECTION 2 24
From Ottoman Empire to Turkish Republic (1299-2025) 24
V. LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS: DUAL SYSTEMS OF CONTROL 24
VI. WEALTH EXTRACTION MECHANISMS: QUANTIFYING THE FLOW 30
VII. NARRATIVE CONSTRUCTION: IDEOLOGY AS EXTRACTION'S JUSTIFICATION 37
VIII. ASSESSMENT: THE OTTOMAN SYSTEM 1299-1650 41
TURKEY CASE STUDY - PART 1 SECTION 3 47
From Ottoman Empire to Turkish Republic (1299-2025) 47
PROLOGUE: A PROVINCIAL NOTABLE'S LEDGER 47
IX. THE LONG DECLINE: CRISIS AND FRAGMENTATION (1650-1800) 48
X. REFORM ATTEMPTS AND THEIR LIMITS (1800-1876) 53
XI. RESISTANCE AND SUPPRESSION: MAINTAINING ORDER THROUGH VIOLENCE 58
XII. ASSESSMENT: WHAT CHANGED AND WHAT PERSISTED (1650-1876) 62
TURKEY CASE STUDY - PART 2 SECTION 1 67
From Ottoman Empire to Turkish Republic (1299-2025) 67
PROLOGUE: THREE GENERATIONS, ONE FAMILY 67
I. CONSTITUTIONAL EXPERIMENTS: FORM WITHOUT SUBSTANCE (1876-1908) 69
II. BALKAN WARS AND ETHNIC TRANSFORMATION (1912-1913) 74
III. WORLD WAR I AND GENOCIDE (1914-1918) 77
TURKEY CASE STUDY - PART 2 SECTION 2 82

From Ottoman Empire to Turkish Republic (1299-2025)..... 82
IV. OTTOMAN DEFEAT AND OCCUPATION (1918-1920)..... 82
V. THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE (1919-1922)..... 86
VI. THE TREATY OF LAUSANNE AND POPULATION EXCHANGE (1923)..... 89
VII. ELITE CONTINUITY: THE ANSWER TO THE CENTRAL QUESTION..... 91
VIII. ASSESSMENT: THE OTTOMAN-TO-REPUBLIC TRANSITION (1299-1923)..... 95
TURKEY CASE STUDY - PART 3 SECTION 1..... 99
From Ottoman Empire to Turkish Republic (1299-2025)..... 99
PROLOGUE: A LANDLORD'S CALCULATIONS..... 99
I. THE ATATÜRK ERA: REVOLUTIONARY FORMS, CONSERVATIVE SUBSTANCE (1923-1938)..... 101
II. THE İNÖNÜ ERA: CONTINUITY AND TRANSITION (1938-1950)..... 104
III. THE 1945 LAND REFORM LAW: PROMISE AND BETRAYAL..... 106
IV. THE DEMOCRAT PARTY ERA: ECONOMIC LIBERALISM WITHOUT SOCIAL JUSTICE (1950-1960)..... 108
V. THE 1960 COUP: MILITARY AS GUARDIAN (1960-1961)..... 112
TURKEY CASE STUDY - PART 3 SECTION 2..... 116
From Ottoman Empire to Turkish Republic (1299-2025)..... 116
VI. THE UNSTABLE 1960s: COALITION GOVERNMENTS AND RISING LEFT (1961-1971). 116
VII. THE 1970s: VIOLENCE, CRISIS, AND BREAKDOWN (1971-1980)..... 119
VIII. THE 1980 COUP: BREAKING LABOR AND CONSOLIDATING NEOLIBERALISM (1980-1983)..... 122
IX. ASSESSMENT: 1923-1980 CONTINUITY AND TRANSFORMATION..... 126
TURKEY CASE STUDY - PART 3 SECTION 2..... 132
From Ottoman Empire to Turkish Republic (1299-2025)..... 132
VI. THE UNSTABLE 1960s: COALITION GOVERNMENTS AND RISING LEFT (1961-1971). 132
VII. THE 1970s: VIOLENCE, CRISIS, AND BREAKDOWN (1971-1980)..... 135
VIII. THE 1980 COUP: BREAKING LABOR AND CONSOLIDATING NEOLIBERALISM (1980-1983)..... 138
IX. ASSESSMENT: 1923-1980 CONTINUITY AND TRANSFORMATION..... 142
TURKEY CASE STUDY - PART 4..... 148
From Ottoman Empire to Turkish Republic (1299-2025)..... 148
PROLOGUE: A BUSINESS EMPIRE'S ADAPTATION..... 148
I. THE ÖZAL ERA: NEOLIBERAL CONSOLIDATION (1983-1993)..... 150
II. THE KURDISH CONFLICT: VIOLENCE AND SUPPRESSION (1984-PRESENT)..... 154
III. THE AKP RISE: ISLAMIC POLITICS AND ELITE TRANSFORMATION (2002-2013)...156
IV. AUTHORITARIAN CONSOLIDATION: ERDOĞAN'S POWER (2013-2025)..... 160
V. CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES AND ELITE ADAPTATION (2015-2025)..... 164
VI. FINAL ASSESSMENT: 726 YEARS OF ELITE POWER (1299-2025)..... 167
THEMATIC BIBLIOGRAPHY: TURKEY CASE STUDY (1299-2025)..... 175

Ottoman Empire to Modern Turkey: Elite Power Across 726 Years..... 175
NOTE ON SOURCES.....175
I. OTTOMAN FOUNDATIONS AND CLASSICAL PERIOD (1299-1800)..... 176
II. TANZIMAT REFORMS AND LATE OTTOMAN PERIOD (1800-1908).....177
III. YOUNG TURKS, WORLD WAR I, AND GENOCIDE (1908-1923)..... 179
IV. EARLY REPUBLICAN PERIOD (1923-1950).....180
V. DEMOCRAT PARTY AND MULTI-PARTY ERA (1950-1980).....181
VI. 1980 COUP AND NEOLIBERAL RESTRUCTURING (1980-2002)..... 182
VII. PKK CONFLICT AND KURDISH QUESTION (1984-Present).....183
VIII. AKP ERA (2002-Present).....184
IX. WEALTH INEQUALITY AND ECONOMIC DATA.....186
X. THEORETICAL AND COMPARATIVE WORKS..... 187
XI. PRIMARY SOURCES AND DOCUMENTS.....188
XII. MEMOIRS AND CONTEMPORARY ACCOUNTS.....189
CONCLUSION.....190

PROLOGUE: A LETTER FROM THE PALACE SCHOOL

Constantinople, 1575

The letter arrived at a village in the Rhodope Mountains six months after imperial officials had taken the boy. Written in Ottoman Turkish by a scribe—the boy's family could not read—it was delivered to the village headman, who attempted to explain its contents to the grieving mother.

"To the family of Nikola, son of Stefan, from the village of Gradets: Your son, who has been given the blessed name Mehmed upon his conversion to the true faith, sends greetings. He studies at the Palace School in Constantinople among the chosen servants of our Padishah. He learns Persian and Arabic, the Quran and the sacred law, horsemanship and the arts of war. If God wills, he will rise to serve the Sultan. He is forbidden to return to your village or to speak your language. This is the Sultan's law. Accept this as God's will."

The mother understood little except that her son was gone forever. What the letter did not say—could not say to Christian peasants—was that Nikola, now Mehmed, was one of three thousand boys taken in the 1575 devşirme levy. He had been selected for the Palace School because he was tall, intelligent, and strong. If he survived the brutal training—and not all did—he might become a Janissary officer, a provincial governor, perhaps even a vizier commanding armies and ruling provinces.

But he would never see his mother again. He would never speak Bulgarian. He would never be Christian. The empire had taken a peasant boy and would remake him into a weapon of state power—loyal only to the Sultan, bound by no family ties, enriched by no inheritance except what the Sultan granted. This was the genius of the system: it created an elite that owed everything to the state and could be destroyed by the state at any moment.

This was not slavery in the sense Europeans understood it—plantation labor, mining, domestic service. This was systematic elite formation through controlled violence. The most capable Christians were seized as children, converted, trained, and elevated to positions of extraordinary power. They commanded armies, governed provinces, accumulated vast wealth. But they remained, in law and in fact, the Sultan's slaves (kul). Their sons could not inherit their positions. Their wealth reverted to the Sultan upon death. They served at the Sultan's pleasure and could be executed without trial, their property confiscated, their families destroyed.

The mother in that Rhodope village could not know that her son might one day command a hundred thousand men, or that his orders might determine whether her village prospered or burned. She knew only that the empire had taken him and would not return him. She had lost a son. The Sultan had gained a slave who might become a master.

This pattern—extraction justified by elevation, violence masked by opportunity, absolute subordination presented as meritocratic advancement—would define Ottoman governance for

three hundred years. Understanding how this system functioned, whom it enriched, and how it persisted across regime transformations is essential to answering our central question: Did the Ottoman elite disappear, get replaced, or adapt when the empire collapsed and modern Turkey emerged?

I. FOUNDATION CONDITIONS: THE OTTOMAN EMERGENCE (1299-1453)

A Small Frontier Principality Becomes an Empire

The Ottoman Empire began as one of many small Turkish principalities (beylik) in Anatolia following the Seljuk Sultanate's fragmentation in the late 13th century. Around 1299, Osman I declared independence from his nominal Seljuk overlords, establishing what would become the Ottoman dynasty. The principality controlled perhaps a few thousand square kilometers near Bursa in northwestern Anatolia, bordered by Byzantine territories to the west and other Turkish beyliks to the east and south.

What distinguished the Ottomans from the dozens of other Turkish principalities that disappeared into historical obscurity? Three factors proved decisive. First, geography—the Ottomans occupied territory adjacent to Byzantine lands, enabling continuous expansion into Christian territories whose wealth exceeded that of Anatolian rivals. Second, military organization—they developed effective cavalry forces and, critically, integrated infantry from the beginning rather than relying solely on nomadic horsemen. Third, administrative pragmatism—they borrowed Byzantine bureaucratic methods, co-opted Christian elites who submitted, and displayed remarkable flexibility in governance while maintaining military expansion as the state's primary function.

The transformation from frontier beylik to empire occurred remarkably quickly by historical standards. Osman's son Orhan captured Bursa in 1326 and made it the capital. The Ottomans crossed into Europe in 1354, establishing a foothold in Thrace. Within a hundred years, they controlled most of the Balkans—Serbia, Bulgaria, much of Greece—while simultaneously expanding in Anatolia. Sultan Murad I (reigned 1362-1389) moved the capital to Adrianople (Edirne) in Thrace, symbolically committing the empire to European conquest. The Battle of Kosovo in 1389, where Murad defeated a Serbian coalition (dying in the process), established Ottoman dominance in the Balkans despite Serbian nationalist mythology portraying it as heroic resistance.

By 1400, the Ottoman Empire controlled territories from the Danube to central Anatolia, with a population of perhaps three to five million—larger than most European states, though still modest compared to the Ming Dynasty or Mamluk Sultanate. But the empire faced existential crisis when Timur's Mongol invasion shattered Ottoman armies at Ankara in 1402, capturing Sultan Bayezid I and triggering civil war among his sons. That the empire survived this

catastrophe—consolidating under Mehmed I by 1413—demonstrated the institutional structures' resilience. The state apparatus, the military organization, and the administrative systems survived the dynasty's near-extinction.

The conquest of Constantinople in 1453 marked the symbolic transformation from principality to empire. Mehmed II, later called "the Conqueror" (Fatih), besieged the Byzantine capital with perhaps 80,000 troops and massive siege cannons—some of the largest artillery pieces yet constructed. After fifty-three days, Ottoman forces breached the walls on May 29, 1453. The last Byzantine Emperor, Constantine XI, died fighting on the walls. The city that had stood for 1,123 years as the Roman Empire's capital fell to a state that was barely 150 years old.

Mehmed's actions after conquest revealed the Ottoman approach to empire-building. He did not massacre the population or raze the city—he needed Constantinople functional as his capital. He repopulated it by forced migration of Turks, Greeks, Armenians, and Jews from across the empire, creating a multi-ethnic metropolis under Ottoman control. He preserved the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, recognizing the Patriarch as leader (millet başı) of Orthodox Christians throughout the empire—thereby creating an institution that would help govern millions of non-Muslim subjects. He transformed the Hagia Sophia into a mosque, demonstrating Islamic conquest while appropriating Byzantine architectural magnificence. He retained Byzantine administrative structures where useful while imposing Ottoman governance.

This pragmatic brutality—systematic violence in service of state-building, selective preservation of conquered institutions, multi-ethnic administration under Islamic supremacy—became the Ottoman pattern. The empire that emerged from Constantinople's conquest in 1453 bore little resemblance to Osman's frontier beylik of 1299. It controlled perhaps fifteen million people across three continents, possessed sophisticated bureaucratic institutions, commanded powerful military forces, and claimed to be the inheritor of both Roman and Islamic imperial traditions.

What Economic Structures Did the Ottomans Inherit and Create?

The Ottomans did not create their empire in an economic vacuum. They conquered territories with existing production systems, trade networks, and social structures. Understanding the economic foundation requires examining what they inherited and what they transformed.

Byzantine Anatolia and the Balkans had complex agricultural economies based on large estates worked by dependent peasants, cities connected by trade routes, and manufacturing in textiles, ceramics, and metalwork. The Ottomans inherited these systems largely intact—landlords who submitted retained estates, merchants who accepted Ottoman rule continued trading, and artisans kept producing. What changed was not the production but the extraction—tax revenues that previously went to Byzantine officials or feudal lords now went to Ottoman administrators and military commanders.

In Anatolia, the beyliks had operated simpler economies—nomadic pastoralism, village agriculture, small-scale trade. The Ottomans systematized and expanded these economies by

securing trade routes, establishing markets, and creating stable property rights (for those who submitted). The genius of Ottoman economic policy was not innovation but organization—they created frameworks that enabled existing economic activities to function while ensuring reliable revenue extraction.

The timar system became the foundation of Ottoman agrarian organization. A timar was a revenue grant—the right to collect taxes from specific villages or territories—awarded to cavalry soldiers (sipahi) in exchange for military service. The sipahi did not own the land; peasants cultivated it and paid taxes, a portion going to the timar-holder. This system solved multiple problems simultaneously. It financed a cavalry force without cash payments from the central treasury. It distributed military forces throughout the empire, providing local security and control. It created a class of military-administrative elite with stakes in Ottoman order. And it prevented accumulation of hereditary landed aristocracy that might challenge sultanic authority—timars were conditional grants that could be revoked if the holder failed to provide military service.

By the late 15th century, perhaps 50,000 to 80,000 sipahis held timars throughout the empire. Each timar holder maintained horses, weapons, and retainers proportional to the timar's value, appearing for campaigns when summoned. A modest timar might generate 3,000 akçe annually (roughly the income of a prosperous artisan), while large timars (ziamets) generated 20,000 akçe or more. The largest grants (has) went to provincial governors (beylerbeyi) and were worth hundreds of thousands of akçe. This created a hierarchy of military elites, all dependent on state grants, none holding hereditary rights to land ownership.

But timar revenues represented only part of the empire's income. State lands (miri) generated revenues going directly to the central treasury. Cities paid taxes on trade and manufacturing. Non-Muslims paid the jizya (poll tax) in exchange for protection and the right to practice their religion—this was explicitly discriminatory, marking non-Muslims as subordinate, but it was also predictable and enabled stable governance of multi-religious territories. Various other levies—customs duties, market fees, mines and salt monopolies—flowed to the treasury.

Trade networks expanded dramatically under Ottoman control. The empire's geographic position between Europe and Asia made it the intermediary for overland trade between East and West. Spices, silk, and luxury goods from India and China traveled through Ottoman territories to European markets. European silver and manufactured goods flowed eastward. The Ottomans taxed these flows through customs posts, enriching the treasury and enabling the empire to function as a commercial intermediary even when it produced little itself.

The conquest of Constantinople particularly enhanced Ottoman commercial power. The city's strategic position controlling Black Sea access, its harbor facilitating Mediterranean trade, and its existing commercial networks made it an economic prize rivaling its symbolic importance. Mehmed II's repopulation policies brought Armenian and Jewish merchants who had capital and trade connections, integrating Constantinople into broader commercial networks.

Yet Ottoman commercial policy revealed crucial characteristics that would persist throughout the empire's history. The state prioritized military and administrative revenue extraction over

productive investment. Trade was valuable because it could be taxed, not because it might drive economic development. Merchants were useful when they generated revenue but were never allowed to accumulate power that might challenge state authority. When merchant wealth became too great, confiscation (müsadere)—often following the merchant's death or accusation of disloyalty—transferred assets to the treasury.

This extractive orientation had long-term consequences. Unlike European states that would increasingly see merchants and productive capital as engines of state power, the Ottomans treated them primarily as revenue sources to be tapped. Manufacturing remained small-scale and artisanal. Capital accumulation was insecure—no merchant could be certain his wealth wouldn't be confiscated. Innovation was rarely rewarded systematically. The timar system discouraged agricultural improvement—sipahis sought to maximize short-term revenue rather than investing in productivity increases they might not capture.

By 1500, the Ottoman Empire had constructed an economic system that was stable, extractive, and militarily effective. It could support large armies through the timar system. It generated substantial treasury revenues through taxation of trade and agriculture. It controlled territories from the Danube to the Euphrates, from the Crimea to the Red Sea. But it had also established patterns that would prove difficult to change: priority of military extraction over productive investment, insecurity of private property against state predation, and absence of institutions encouraging technological innovation or capital accumulation outside state control.

The Multi-Ethnic Imperative and the Millet System

The Ottoman Empire faced a fundamental challenge shared by all pre-modern empires: how to govern vast territories containing populations of different languages, religions, and cultures. The solution they developed—the millet system—was neither uniquely Ottoman nor perfectly consistent, but it proved durable enough to last until the empire's final decades.

The term millet originally meant "religion" or "religious community." In practice, it referred to the institutionalized self-governance of non-Muslim communities under their own religious authorities, who were recognized and empowered by the Ottoman state. The Greek Orthodox millet, the Armenian millet, and the Jewish millet were the primary categories, though the system was more fluid and less bureaucratically precise than nationalist historiography sometimes suggests.

Mehmed II's recognition of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch after Constantinople's conquest exemplified the system's logic. By appointing Gennadios Scholarios as Patriarch and granting him authority over Orthodox Christians throughout the empire, Mehmed created an intermediary who would govern the Orthodox population on the state's behalf. The Patriarch became responsible for collecting certain taxes, administering religious law in matters of marriage, inheritance, and community disputes, and maintaining order within the Orthodox community. In exchange, the Patriarch gained Ottoman backing for his authority and the protection of Orthodox religious practice.

This arrangement served multiple purposes for the Ottoman state. It reduced the administrative burden of directly governing millions of Christians who spoke different languages and followed different customs. It created Orthodox elites with stakes in Ottoman order—the Patriarch's authority derived from Ottoman recognition, making him dependent on sultanic favor. It prevented unified Christian resistance by institutionalizing separate communities that competed for Ottoman favor rather than cooperating against Muslim rule. And it provided theological cover—Islamic law (sharia) prescribed protected status (dhimmi) for "People of the Book" (Christians and Jews), and the millet system implemented this prescription while serving state interests.

The Armenian and Jewish millets functioned similarly. The Armenian Patriarch in Constantinople governed Armenians throughout the empire. The Chief Rabbi (Hakham Başı) led Jewish communities. Each community had internal hierarchies, religious courts, and communal institutions that the Ottoman state recognized and supported. Non-Muslims paid the jizya, faced legal disabilities (they couldn't testify against Muslims in Islamic courts, couldn't carry weapons, faced restrictions on dress and building), and occupied subordinate social status. But they could practice their religion, govern their communities internally, and engage in commerce and many professions.

The system was not benevolent multiculturalism—it was hierarchical administration of a multi-ethnic empire under Islamic supremacy. Muslims enjoyed superior legal status. Conversion to Islam was encouraged (through tax incentives, social mobility, and institutional pressure) while conversion from Islam was punishable by death. The millet leaders were clients of Ottoman power, removable if they displeased the Sultan. Non-Muslims faced periodic violence, especially during times of crisis, and could never achieve the highest state positions (the devşirme system nominally created Muslim converts from Christian boys, separating even high-ranking former Christians from their birth communities).

Yet the system proved remarkably stable for centuries. Christian and Jewish communities accepted subordinate status in exchange for religious autonomy and economic opportunity. The millet leaders governed effectively enough to maintain order and extract revenue. And the institutional separation prevented the cross-communal alliances that might have challenged Ottoman rule. When Greek merchants grew wealthy, Armenian artisans prospered, or Jewish financiers accumulated capital, they did so within separate communal frameworks that competed rather than cooperated.

This system's long-term consequences were profound. It institutionalized religious identity as the primary social category, making ethnicity and religion virtually synonymous. Greeks were Orthodox Christians governed by the Patriarch. Armenians were Armenian Christians governed by the Armenian Patriarch. Religious authorities became political intermediaries, conflating religious and communal leadership. No concept of trans-communal citizenship existed—you were Orthodox or Armenian or Jewish or Muslim, not "Ottoman" in any meaningful political sense until the 19th century Tanzimat reforms attempted (unsuccessfully) to create an Ottoman identity transcending religious divisions.

When the empire finally collapsed in the early 20th century, these institutionalized divisions would fuel nationalist conflicts and genocidal violence. The millet system that had enabled Ottoman governance of multi-ethnic territories for four centuries became, in the age of nationalism, a source of catastrophic fragmentation. But in the 15th and 16th centuries, it was a pragmatic solution to the problem of imperial governance—one that served elite interests by preventing unified resistance while extracting revenue from all communities.

II. LABOR SYSTEMS: SLAVERY AS ELITE FORMATION

The Devşirme: Systematic Child Extraction

No institution better illustrates the Ottoman approach to governance than the devşirme—the child levy that took Christian boys, converted them to Islam, trained them as elite slaves (kul), and deployed them as soldiers, administrators, and governors throughout the empire. This was not peripheral to Ottoman power; it was central. For three hundred years (roughly 1380s to 1680s), the highest positions in the empire—grand viziers, provincial governors, Janissary officers—were held overwhelmingly by men taken as boys from Christian villages, converted, and trained in sultanic service.

The mechanics were systematic. Every few years (the frequency varied from three to seven years depending on military needs), imperial officials toured Christian villages in the Balkans—Serbia, Albania, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Greece—registering boys aged roughly eight to eighteen. They selected the strongest, most intelligent, and most physically capable, taking perhaps one boy from every forty households. Families could not refuse without severe consequences. The boys were marched to Constantinople, converted to Islam, circumcised, and given new names. Most were sent to Turkish peasant families in Anatolia for several years to learn Turkish and adapt to Muslim culture. A select few—the most promising—went directly to the Palace School in Constantinople.

The Palace School (Enderun) was the most elite institution in the empire. Boys underwent rigorous education in Islamic theology, Persian and Arabic literature, Ottoman administration, military science, and courtly etiquette. They advanced through ranks based on demonstrated ability. The curriculum was designed to create Ottoman servants who were militarily capable, administratively competent, culturally sophisticated, and absolutely loyal. Physical discipline was harsh—beatings were routine, failures were punished severely. But successful graduates could rise to positions of extraordinary power.

The majority of devşirme recruits, not selected for the Palace School, became Janissaries (yeniçeri, literally "new troops"). These were the empire's elite infantry force, organized into units called ortas, trained in firearms and siege warfare, and deployed as the shock troops of Ottoman armies. Janissaries received salaries from the treasury, making them the empire's first standing professional army. They lived in barracks, forbidden to marry (until the restriction

eroded in the late 16th century), and devoted themselves to military service. Successful Janissaries could become officers commanding thousands, accumulating wealth through campaign booty and state grants.

Palace School graduates became the highest-ranking officials. They staffed the Imperial Council (Divan), governed provinces, commanded armies, and administered the empire's finances. The grand vizier—the Sultan's chief minister and the empire's second-most powerful figure—was almost always a devşirme graduate from the 15th through early 17th centuries. Men like Sokollu Mehmed Pasha (grand vizier 1565-1579, born in Bosnia as Sokolović), Ibrahim Pasha (grand vizier 1523-1536, born in Parga as a Greek or Albanian), and dozens of others rose from Christian peasant origins to command empires and accumulate fortunes.

But they remained, legally and practically, the Sultan's slaves. They could not pass their positions to their sons—the empire was not a hereditary aristocracy. Their wealth reverted to the Sultan upon death unless specifically granted otherwise. They could be executed without trial at the Sultan's command, their property confiscated, their families destroyed. The very positions that made them powerful made them vulnerable. Service meant subordination, advancement meant dependency.

Why did the Ottomans create this system? Several reasons converged. First, it created an elite without independent power bases. Unlike hereditary Turkish nobility with family networks and tribal loyalties, devşirme officials owed everything to the Sultan. They had no relatives to protect them, no ancestral lands to retreat to, no alternative sources of authority. Second, it provided meritocratic selection—boys were chosen for ability, trained rigorously, and advanced based on performance. This produced more competent administrators than hereditary succession. Third, it prevented Turkish aristocratic dominance—by elevating converted Christians, the Sultan balanced different ethnic groups against each other, preventing any single faction from becoming too powerful.

The system also served ideological purposes. It demonstrated Islam's universalism—that a Bosnian peasant boy could become grand vizier showed that Muslim identity transcended ethnicity. It provided propaganda—families might see their sons' elevation as opportunity rather than loss (though most families experienced it as traumatic theft). And it continuously replenished the elite—because kul positions weren't hereditary, each generation required new recruits, maintaining systemic dependency on the Sultan.

For the boys taken and their families, the experience was devastating. Christian communities saw their most capable children systematically extracted. Parents lost sons forever—the boys were forbidden to return home, forbidden to speak their native languages, forbidden to maintain Christian identity. Many boys died during training. Those who survived were culturally destroyed and reconstructed as Ottoman Muslims. The psychological violence of this transformation cannot be understated—boys were torn from families, forced to adopt their conquerors' religion, trained to fight against their own people (Janissaries often campaigned in the Balkans, potentially fighting near their birth villages), and socialized to see their former identities as shameful.

Yet some rose to extraordinary heights. Mehmed Sokolović, taken from a Serbian family, became grand vizier and arguably the most powerful man in the world during his tenure, governing an empire larger than any European state. The system created incentives for collaboration—families might hope a son's elevation would benefit relatives, Christian communities might seek favoritism from highly-placed former community members, and the possibility of advancement made resistance seem futile.

The human cost was immense but impossible to quantify precisely. Over three hundred years, perhaps 200,000 to 500,000 boys were taken in devşirme levies. Most became Janissaries or provincial administrators. A few thousand reached the highest positions. Countless thousands died in training, in battle, or in obscure provincial posts. Their families mourned them as lost. The empire gained soldiers, administrators, and a self-replenishing elite that persisted until the system's gradual decline in the late 17th century.

Slavery Beyond the Devşirme: Household and Military

The devşirme was the most distinctive form of Ottoman slavery, but it was not the only form. The empire operated a massive slave system encompassing household servants, agricultural laborers, artisans, concubines, and military slaves outside the Janissary corps.

Household slavery was ubiquitous in wealthy Ottoman families. Slaves performed domestic labor, served as personal attendants, and in elite households could hold positions of significant authority managing estates or businesses. Female slaves (cariye) served as concubines—the imperial harem consisted largely of enslaved women from Circassia, Georgia, and other regions. These women could achieve high status if they bore the Sultan's children (the Sultan's mother, the Valide Sultan, wielded enormous power), but they remained technically enslaved.

The sources of slaves were diverse. War captives from campaigns in the Caucasus, Eastern Europe, and the Mediterranean became slaves. Crimean Tatars, Ottoman vassals, conducted regular slave raids into Ukraine and Russia, selling captives in Ottoman markets. Children were kidnapped or sold by desperate families. North African corsairs raiding Mediterranean coasts seized Europeans as slaves. The Ottoman Empire was one terminus of trans-Saharan and Black Sea slave networks that supplied millions over the empire's six centuries.

Agricultural slavery was less prevalent in Ottoman core territories than in plantations of the Americas or sugar estates of the Caribbean, but it existed. Slaves worked on estates (çiftliks) particularly in areas like Crete or Cyprus where plantation agriculture developed. The scale never approached New World slavery, but the practice was not absent.

Military slavery extended beyond the Janissaries. The sultan maintained slave cavalry units. Provincial governors kept military slaves. Naval forces (particularly the North African corsair fleets operating under Ottoman suzerainty) relied heavily on enslaved rowers and sailors. The line between free and enslaved military service was often blurred—many "free" soldiers were effectively bonded through debt or obligation.

Manumission was possible and occurred regularly, particularly for household slaves who converted to Islam. Islamic law encouraged freeing Muslim slaves, creating a population of freed slaves (azatlı) who often maintained ties to former masters. But manumission was not guaranteed, depended on owner's will, and was less common for slaves performing labor rather than personal service.

The total slave population at any given time is impossible to determine precisely, but estimates suggest five to ten percent of the empire's population were enslaved in the 16th and 17th centuries—perhaps two to three million people in an empire of 30 million. This represented one of the world's largest slave systems, rivaling the Atlantic slave trade in scale though organized differently.

The economic significance was substantial. Slave labor supplemented free labor in households, estates, and workshops. The slave trade itself generated revenue—slave markets (esir pazarı) operated in major cities, and the state taxed slave sales. Elite households displayed wealth through slave ownership—having dozens or hundreds of slaves signified status. The sultan's household contained thousands of slaves, making it the empire's largest slaveholder.

But slavery's political significance exceeded its economic role. Slave elites (kul) governed the empire. The sultan's absolute power rested partly on his slave household's loyalty—he could elevate or destroy slaves at will, making them completely dependent. The system prevented hereditary aristocracy that might challenge sultanic authority. And it created an elite disconnected from the general population—governors were often strangers to the territories they ruled, having no local ties or loyalties except to the Sultan.

This elite slavery system would persist until forced reforms in the 19th century, though the devşirme specifically declined by the late 1600s as Janissaries became hereditary and free-born Muslims increasingly filled elite positions. But the pattern it established—elite dependency on central authority, insecurity of position, conflation of service with subordination—would mark Ottoman governance even after the slave system's formal end.

Peasant Labor: The Other Side of Extraction

While the devşirme and elite slavery captured attention for their systematic violence and institutional sophistication, the vast majority of Ottoman subjects were peasants whose labor sustained the entire system. Understanding peasant labor conditions is essential to comprehending who produced the wealth that elite and state extracted.

Ottoman peasants (reaya, literally "flock"—a term revealing their status as subjects to be tended and sheared) worked land they did not own. The theoretical framework held that all land belonged to the Sultan, who granted usage rights to peasants. In practice, peasants cultivated land continuously, passing usage rights to heirs, and treating it as theirs except they could not sell it and had to pay taxes. The main tax (çift resmi) was assessed on peasant households with land sufficient to support a plow team. Additional taxes included harvest taxes (öşür, theoretically one-tenth of produce), various fees, and periodic extraordinary levies.

Tax burden varied by region, crop, and category of land, but the total probably extracted 30-40 percent of peasant production in the 16th century, increasing over time. Some revenues went to timar-holders, some to state lands (miri), some as religious endowments (waqf). From the peasant perspective, the distinction mattered little—they paid multiple overlapping levies to various authorities.

Peasants faced legal restrictions on mobility. They could not freely leave land without permission and risked punishment for abandonment. This wasn't chattel slavery—they weren't bought or sold—but it was bonded labor through legal restrictions and debt obligations. Peasants who owed taxes or fees to timar-holders or moneylenders couldn't leave until debts were paid. In practice, many peasant families remained on the same land for generations, not from choice but from inability to escape.

Working conditions varied by region and crop but generally involved intensive agricultural labor for subsistence outcomes. Peasants retained enough to feed their families (barely, in poor years) and pay taxes. They had little opportunity for accumulation or improvement. Agricultural techniques changed slowly—the Ottoman state neither invested in improvements nor created incentives for innovation. Timar-holders and tax farmers wanted maximum short-term extraction, not long-term productivity increases.

Peasant resistance took various forms. Flight to cities or to frontier regions was common enough that the state repeatedly issued edicts demanding peasants' return to land. Brigandage (eşkıya) was endemic—dispossessed or desperate peasants took to banditry, preying on travelers and occasionally attacking state officials. Tax evasion was constant—peasants underreported harvests, hid production, and bribed officials. Open revolt was rarer but occurred—the Celali Rebellions of the late 16th and early 17th centuries saw peasant and dispossessed soldier uprisings disrupt Anatolia for decades.

The Celali Rebellions (roughly 1590s-1610s) particularly revealed the system's brutal logic. Economic crisis—inflation from American silver inflows, military spending, climate deterioration—squeezed peasants while disrupting timar system. Demobilized soldiers without pay turned to banditry. Peasants fleeing taxation and violence joined them. Regions of Anatolia descended into warfare between state forces and rebel bands. The state's response was systematic violence—armies dispatched to crush rebellions burned villages, executed rebels, and forcibly returned peasants to land. Tens of thousands died. When order was restored, the extraction system resumed with increased taxation to pay for suppression.

This pattern—crisis producing peasant suffering and resistance, state responding with overwhelming violence, extraction resuming at intensified levels—would repeat throughout Ottoman history. Peasants had no institutional mechanism to limit extraction or resist oppression. They could flee, evade, or rebel, but they could not change the system. The elite coordination mechanisms discussed earlier—devşirme officials, timar-holders, religious authorities—all served to maintain extraction. Peasants were fragmented by geography, language, and religion (the millet system prevented cross-communal peasant alliance). They lacked organization, resources, or ideology that might enable successful resistance.

By the mid-17th century, perhaps 80-85 percent of the empire's population were peasants producing the agricultural surplus that fed cities, supported armies, and enriched elites. They received minimal protection in exchange—timar-holders theoretically provided security, but often were absent or extractive. The state claimed to provide justice, but legal systems favored elites and non-Muslims faced institutional disadvantages. Religion offered consolation but also taught submission to authority as divinely ordained.

The peasant labor system's structure would persist into the 20th century despite reforms. Land ownership patterns established in the Ottoman period—large estates worked by dependent peasants—would characterize Anatolia until the Republic's land reforms (limited and late). The psychology of peasant subordination—acceptance of elite authority, distrust of state power, reliance on family and local networks—would mark Turkish rural society. And the pattern of state extraction from agricultural producers to fund military and administrative apparatus would continue in modified form.

Understanding Ottoman peasant labor is essential for the framework's central question. When the empire collapsed and the Turkish Republic emerged, did the rural elite who controlled land and extracted labor disappear, get replaced, or adapt? Did peasants gain control of land, or did extraction patterns persist under new management? The answer, as we'll see, is that rural elites adapted remarkably successfully, maintaining control of land and labor through the Republic's early decades until urbanization and mechanization gradually transformed rural society.

III. CAPITAL AND RESOURCE CONTROL: THE LIMITS OF ACCUMULATION

Merchant Capital and State Predation

The Ottoman Empire hosted extensive commercial activity—trade routes connecting Europe and Asia, manufacturing in textiles and metalwork, financial services supporting commerce and state finance. Merchants accumulated substantial capital, particularly in coastal cities like Istanbul, Izmir, and Salonica. Yet Ottoman merchant capital never became dominant economic power or challenged state authority as merchant classes did in Western Europe. Understanding why requires examining the relationship between state and capital.

Ottoman commercial policy prioritized revenue extraction over capital accumulation or economic development. Trade was valuable because customs duties, market fees, and taxes on transactions generated treasury income. Merchants were useful because they facilitated commerce that could be taxed. But the state viewed merchant wealth with suspicion and as a source of emergency revenue when needed.

The practice of müsadere (confiscation) exemplified this relationship. When wealthy merchants died or were accused of disloyalty, the state could confiscate their property. This was not rare or

exceptional—it was systematic practice particularly targeting the wealthiest individuals. Grand viziers, provincial governors, and rich merchants all faced confiscation risk. The legal justification varied—accusations of corruption, claims that wealth was "undeserved," or simply assertion of sultanic prerogative. The practical effect was that no private wealth was secure against state appropriation.

This insecurity had profound consequences for capital accumulation. Merchants could not reliably pass wealth to heirs. They had incentives to consume rather than invest, to hide wealth rather than display it openly, and to convert assets into forms that could be concealed or moved. Productive investment—building factories, improving technology, developing new industries—was particularly risky because such investments were visible and immobile. Better to invest in trade, which generated quick returns and whose assets (goods, ships, networks) could be liquidated or relocated.

The state also granted commercial monopolies and controlled key resources. Certain goods—salt, tobacco (after its introduction), mines—were state monopolies. Trade in strategic goods required licenses. Guild regulations restricted production and controlled entry into trades. These regulations served state interests (revenue, control) rather than merchant interests (profit, expansion). When guilds tried to use their position to raise prices or restrict competition too much, the state intervened to maintain order and protect revenue.

Foreign merchants—particularly Venetians, Genoese, and later French, English, and Dutch—operated under capitulations (ahidnameler), treaties granting them favorable trade terms, reduced tariff rates, and legal privileges including exemption from Ottoman courts in commercial disputes. These capitulations were originally granted by strong sultans from a position of power, as concessions that generated revenue and attracted trade. But over time, they became tools of European economic penetration, as foreign merchants gained advantages over Ottoman subjects.

Armenian and Jewish merchants, as non-Muslim subjects, occupied a particular position. They faced legal disabilities but also had extensive commercial networks extending beyond Ottoman borders. Jewish merchants expelled from Spain in 1492 and welcomed by the Ottomans brought commercial expertise and connections. Armenian merchants controlled much of overland trade with Persia and Central Asia. Greek merchants dominated much of maritime trade. These communities accumulated substantial capital, but their political position was always subordinate and their wealth was vulnerable to confiscation and discrimination.

The absence of joint-stock companies or corporate structures limited capital mobilization for large enterprises. Individual merchants or family partnerships predominated. There was no Ottoman equivalent of the Dutch East India Company or English East India Company—chartered corporations mobilizing massive capital through stock sales and operating as quasi-state actors. The closest Ottoman equivalents were state-controlled enterprises or merchant consortiums that operated informally.

Banking and finance developed but remained primitive compared to European institutions. Moneylending occurred widely, often performed by Jewish and Armenian financiers. The state borrowed from bankers, particularly to finance wars. But there was no central bank, no sophisticated credit instruments, and constant inflation risk (particularly after American silver began flooding in during the 16th century). Interest (riba) was technically prohibited under Islamic law, though various legal fictions allowed its practice. This prohibition created complications for financial development even when honored in the breach.

By the mid-17th century, Ottoman capital accumulation lagged dramatically behind northwestern Europe. While Dutch and English merchants were building global trading empires backed by joint-stock companies and sophisticated financial institutions, Ottoman merchants remained constrained by state predation, legal insecurity, and institutional underdevelopment. The Ottoman Empire was wealthy in absolute terms—it controlled productive territories and lucrative trade routes. But the wealth was extracted by state and military elite rather than accumulated by productive capitalists who might invest in development.

This pattern had profound long-term consequences. The Ottoman Empire never experienced an indigenous industrial revolution. Manufacturing remained artisanal and small-scale. When European industrial goods flooded Ottoman markets in the 19th century, Ottoman producers couldn't compete. The empire became economically dependent on Europe, importing manufactured goods and exporting raw materials—the classic pattern of peripheral capitalism.

For our central question about elite continuity, this matters because it meant the Ottoman elite was never primarily commercial or industrial. Elite wealth derived from land (timars, later çiftliks), state service, or tax farming. Merchant wealth existed but was subordinate and insecure. When the empire collapsed and the Republic emerged, the question would be whether a new industrial capitalist class would arise from Ottoman merchants (it would, partially, from minority merchants particularly Greeks and Armenians), from foreign capital (yes, extensively), or from state-created enterprises (yes, particularly after the 1930s). The absence of a strong indigenous merchant class that had accumulated capital and developed industry meant Turkish capitalism would develop under different conditions than European capitalism had.

Tax Farming and the Rise of Provincial Elites

As the timar system declined from the late 16th century onward, tax farming (iltizam) became increasingly central to Ottoman revenue collection. Understanding this transformation is crucial for tracking elite continuity, because tax farming created a class of provincial elites whose power derived from control over revenue extraction rather than military service.

Tax farming worked straightforwardly in concept though complexly in practice. The state auctioned the right to collect taxes in a specific region or from a specific revenue source for a fixed period (initially one to three years, later often lifetime grants called malikane). The winning bidder paid the state an upfront sum and then collected taxes, keeping revenues above the contracted amount as profit. The state benefited by receiving guaranteed revenue immediately

rather than waiting for collections. The tax farmer (mültezim) benefited by potential profit if collections exceeded the contracted sum.

In practice, tax farming created numerous problems while enriching a new elite class. Tax farmers had every incentive to maximize short-term extraction—they wanted to collect as much as possible during their tenure. They had no incentive for long-term development or peasant welfare. If excessive taxation impoverished a region, the tax farmer would simply bid for a different region next cycle. Peasants suffered under tax farmers' maximalist extraction, often paying far more than legal rates through various fees, bribes, and extortions.

Successful tax farmers accumulated enormous wealth. They could bid for multiple tax farms, creating revenue portfolios. They could use loans to finance bids, then use profits to expand their holdings. The wealthiest tax farmers became provincial notables (ayan), wielding local power that eventually rivaled central authority. By the 18th century, powerful ayan families controlled entire regions, maintained private armies, and effectively ruled as semi-autonomous local lords while nominally representing Ottoman authority.

The transformation from timar military cavalry to tax farmer notables fundamentally changed the empire's elite structure. Timar-holders were military officers whose land grants depended on providing military service. They could be disciplined by having timars revoked. They had to appear for campaigns. They were tied into a military-administrative hierarchy. Tax farmers, in contrast, were revenue contractors whose relationship to the state was financial rather than military. They didn't necessarily provide military service. Their power derived from wealth and local control rather than military function.

This shift accompanied broader military changes. The Janissaries, originally disciplined slave-soldiers, had become a hereditary caste by the late 16th century. They married, passed membership to sons, engaged in commerce, and intervened in politics through frequent revolts when pay was delayed or reforms threatened their privileges. The provincial cavalry (sipahi) declined as warfare increasingly required firearms and artillery rather than mounted archers. The empire increasingly relied on mercenaries and provincial forces raised by ayan rather than timar-based cavalry.

The fiscal consequences were severe. Tax farming generated immediate revenue but at long-term cost. It drove peasants to flight and rebellion, reducing the tax base. It created powerful provincial elites who challenged central authority. It encouraged corruption as officials at all levels skimmed from revenue flows. And it locked the state into dependence on tax farmers—attempting to reform the system would face resistance from entrenched interests who profited from it.

By the 18th century, the Ottoman Empire's governance increasingly resembled feudalism despite its formal structures. Powerful ayan families controlled regions, extracted revenue, maintained armies, and negotiated with the central state rather than simply obeying it. The Sultan in Istanbul could project power through military force when he concentrated resources, but he couldn't effectively administer the provinces without ayan cooperation. Some ayan

became so powerful they held hereditary governorships—the Karaosmanoğlu family in western Anatolia, the Azm family in Damascus, and others ruled effectively as provincial dynasties.

This decentralization would have crucial consequences for the empire's collapse and the Republic's formation. The ayan class represented a provincial elite whose power derived from control over land and revenue extraction rather than military service or state appointment. They were more like landed gentry than bureaucratic administrators. When the empire collapsed, many of these families would adapt to the Republic by converting their local power into modern forms—becoming landowners under the Republic's new property system, entering politics through the new parliament, investing in commerce and industry. Their power persisted through regime transformation because it was rooted in local control of productive resources rather than dependent on the imperial system.

For the framework's central question, this matters enormously. The Ottoman elite was never monolithic. The devşirme-based slave elite of the 16th century differed fundamentally from the tax farming ayan of the 18th century. When the empire collapsed, the slave elite disappeared (it had already largely disappeared by the 19th century reforms), but the ayan—rooted in local land control—could adapt. Tracking elite continuity requires distinguishing between different elite fractions and examining which ones had resources that could be converted to power under the new regime.

IV. ELITE COORDINATION: THE MECHANISMS OF CONTROL

The Imperial Council and Central Administration

At the apex of Ottoman governance sat the Imperial Council (Divan-ı Hümayun), the body where the empire's highest officials coordinated policy. Understanding how this council functioned reveals much about elite coordination mechanisms.

The Divan met regularly (four times weekly in the 16th century) in the Topkapı Palace, typically without the Sultan present (he could observe from a screened window). The Grand Vizier presided. Members included the two military judges (kazasker), the chief financial officer (defterdar), and the heads of various administrative departments. Other officials attended when issues in their purview were discussed. Decisions were recorded in protocols, creating an administrative archive.

The Council's functions were extensive. It heard legal appeals, particularly important cases involving high-ranking individuals or significant property. It discussed military campaigns, allocating resources and planning logistics. It reviewed financial reports and authorized expenditures. It appointed officials to provincial positions. It received foreign ambassadors and negotiated treaties. In short, it coordinated the empire's governance across all domains.

But the Divan's power derived not from constitutional authority but from the Sultan's delegation. The Sultan could overrule any decision, dismiss any official, and handle matters personally rather than through the Council. The Council was consultative and administrative, not legislative or limiting. It enabled effective governance by pooling expertise and coordinating elite action, but it never became an institution constraining sultanic authority as European parliaments would constrain monarchies.

The Grand Vizier's position particularly illustrates Ottoman elite dynamics. He was the Sultan's absolute deputy, commanding in the Sultan's absence, authorized to use the imperial seal, and responsible for all administration. But he served entirely at the Sultan's pleasure. He could be dismissed instantly, and frequently was—the average tenure of a Grand Vizier in the 16th and 17th centuries was less than three years. Many were executed after dismissal, particularly if policies failed or the Sultan grew suspicious.

This created a contradiction at the heart of Ottoman governance. The Grand Vizier needed to be competent and assertive to govern effectively, but being too successful or too independent invited sultanic suspicion. The ideal Grand Vizier was capable enough to maintain the empire but subordinate enough to pose no threat. This balance was difficult to maintain, leading to frequent turnover and constant anxiety among high officials.

The central bureaucracy extended beyond the Divan. Various departments (kalem) handled finance, military affairs, provincial administration, and foreign relations. These departments were staffed by scribes and officials who often spent entire careers in bureaucratic service, creating institutional continuity even as sultans and grand viziers changed. The kalemiye (bureaucratic) class developed its own identity, networks, and culture, distinct from the military (seyfiye) and religious (ilmiye) classes.

Elite coordination through the Divan and bureaucracy had several characteristics crucial for understanding Ottoman governance. First, it was highly centralized—provincial officials reported to Istanbul, decisions were made in the capital, and implementation required central approval. This made the empire governable but also slow to respond to local conditions. Second, it was personalistic—relationships between individuals mattered enormously, and power derived from proximity to the Sultan and favor of superiors. Competence mattered, but loyalty and political skill mattered more. Third, it was insecure—no position was permanent, no wealth was safe, and career advancement came with existential risk.

These characteristics created both effectiveness and dysfunction. The system could mobilize resources impressively—when the Sultan ordered a campaign, the bureaucracy could organize logistics for armies of 100,000 or more, coordinate supplies across vast distances, and manage complex financial arrangements. But the system also discouraged initiative, encouraged corruption (since positions were insecure, officials skimmed from revenues to secure their futures), and created constant factional conflict as officials competed for sultanic favor.

The Divan's decline in the 17th and 18th centuries, as sultans increasingly ruled through favorites and informal networks rather than through the institutional council, exemplified the

system's weaknesses. Without the Sultan's active engagement, the Divan became a rubber stamp. Power shifted to whoever controlled access to the Sultan—palace officials, powerful women in the harem, military commanders. The institutional mechanisms designed to coordinate elite action became vehicles for factional conflict.

For our framework analysis, the Divan and central bureaucracy represent elite coordination mechanisms that functioned effectively when centralized power was strong but failed to prevent fragmentation when central authority weakened. The elite coordinated through state institutions rather than through independent networks (like European aristocratic networks or corporate boards). This meant elite power was entirely dependent on state power—when the state collapsed, the elite coordinating through it would collapse too unless they had alternative power sources (like the ayan's local land control).

This institutional dependency explains why the Ottoman bureaucratic elite largely disappeared during the empire's collapse while provincial landed elite adapted. The bureaucratic elite's power derived from positions granted by the state. When the state vanished, their power vanished. The landed elite's power derived from control of productive resources. When the state changed, they could offer their local power to the new regime in exchange for continued privileges. Tracking which elite fractions persisted thus requires examining which had institutional versus material sources of power.

Religious Authority and Ideological Control

The ulema—Islamic scholars who administered religious law, staffed schools, and provided religious legitimation—constituted the third pillar of Ottoman elite structure alongside military-administrative officials and local notables. Understanding the ulema's role is essential for grasping how the Ottoman elite controlled information and justified extraction.

The ulema organized hierarchically with the Şeyhülislam (Sheikh al-Islam) at apex. He was the empire's highest religious authority, appointed by the Sultan, and had authority to issue fetvas (religious legal opinions) that had binding force. Below him were the kazasker (military judges, who sat on the Divan), kadis (judges in provinces and cities), muftis (jurists who issued lesser fetvas), madrasa teachers, and imams of mosques.

This hierarchy served multiple purposes. It adjudicated disputes according to Islamic law (sharia) in matters of family law, inheritance, contracts, and many criminal cases. It staffed the educational system—madrasas taught Islamic sciences, Arabic, Persian, and various secular subjects to boys destined for bureaucratic or religious careers. It provided ideological legitimation—ulema declared the Sultan's wars to be jihad, justified taxation as religiously necessary, and taught populations to accept authority as divinely ordained.

The Ottoman state controlled the ulema through appointments and patronage. The Sultan appointed the Şeyhülislam, who appointed kadis and other officials. Ambitious religious scholars recognized that career advancement required providing interpretations that supported state interests. The ulema were paid through state salaries and religious endowments (waqf) that the

state supervised. They were integrated into state administration—kadis collected certain taxes, administered state property, and enforced state regulations alongside adjudicating religious law.

This integration made the ulema part of the ruling class rather than independent religious authorities. High-ranking ulema came from families with connections to military-administrative elites. They lived privileged lives, accumulating wealth through salaries and fees. They intermarried with other elite families. Their interests aligned with maintaining the system that enriched them rather than challenging it on behalf of the masses.

The fetva system illustrates how religious authority served power. When the Sultan needed religious sanction for an action—declaring war, imposing new taxes, executing officials, even deposing sultans—he requested a fetva from the Şeyhülislam. The Şeyhülislam would provide an opinion grounding the action in Islamic law. These opinions had enormous propaganda value—they demonstrated the Sultan governed according to God's law rather than arbitrary whim.

But fetvas also constrained power in subtle ways. A Şeyhülislam who consistently provided opinions contradicting consensus religious scholarship would lose credibility. Ulema had to balance serving the Sultan with maintaining religious legitimacy. On rare occasions, ulema pushed back against state demands or refused to provide fetvas for controversial actions. More commonly, they found creative legal reasoning to justify what the Sultan wanted while maintaining appearance of religious probity.

Education control gave the ulema power over ideological reproduction. Madrasas taught Islamic sciences through curriculum emphasizing memorization of texts, mastery of Arabic and Persian, and acceptance of established interpretations. They socialized students into accepting hierarchy as natural and divinely ordained. They taught that the Sultan was God's shadow on earth, that submission to authority was religious duty, and that the Ottoman order was Islam's defender against infidels.

For non-Muslims, the millet system placed religious authorities in analogous positions. The Greek Orthodox Patriarch, Armenian Patriarch, and Chief Rabbi governed their communities partly through religious law. They taught their followers to accept subordinate status as the price of religious autonomy. They became invested in Ottoman order because their authority derived from Ottoman recognition.

This religious control of information had profound effects. Populations internalized ideological frameworks that legitimized their subordination. Muslims accepted vast inequalities as God's will. Non-Muslims accepted dhimmi status as inevitable. Peasants accepted elite extraction as the natural order. Religious education taught submission rather than resistance, acceptance rather than criticism.

The ulema's conservatism also retarded technological and intellectual innovation. Printing was banned until 1727 (for Arabic script—Christians had printing presses earlier), suppressing information dissemination. Religious scholars resisted scientific ideas that contradicted

traditional interpretations. Education remained focused on classical texts rather than new knowledge. This conservatism served elite interests by preventing ideas that might challenge existing order, but it also left the empire intellectually stagnant while Europe underwent scientific revolution.

The 19th century Tanzimat reforms would attempt to create secular education and legal systems alongside religious institutions, gradually eroding the ulema's monopoly. But the pattern of religious authority serving state power while controlling ideological production would persist in modified form even in the secular Turkish Republic—where the Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) continues to provide state-controlled religious guidance that generally supports political authority.

For our framework analysis, the ulema represent the information monopoly component of elite power. They controlled education, shaped ideology, and provided religious legitimation for extraction and violence. They were part of the ruling class, not independent voices challenging it. When the empire collapsed and the Republic emerged as explicitly secular, the question would be whether new ideological mechanisms—nationalism, developmentalism, Kemalism—would replace religious authority while serving similar functions of legitimating elite power and suppressing dissent.

Coverage:

- Foundation Conditions: Ottoman emergence (1299-1453), economic structures, millet system
- Labor Systems: Devşirme system, slavery beyond devşirme, peasant labor
- Capital and Resource Control: Merchant capital under state predation, tax farming and rise of provincial elites (ayan)
- Elite Coordination: Imperial Council and central bureaucracy, ulema and religious authority

Next Section (Part 1 Section 2) Will Cover:

- Legal and Institutional Frameworks (Şeriat law, kanun, capitulations)
- Wealth Extraction Mechanisms (quantified data on revenue flows)
- Narrative Construction and Ideology (jihad ideology, Islamic imperial legitimacy)
- Assessment of 1299-1650 period establishing baseline patterns

TURKEY CASE STUDY - PART 1 SECTION 2

From Ottoman Empire to Turkish Republic (1299-2025)

Legal Frameworks, Extraction Mechanisms, and Imperial Ideology (1299-1650)

V. LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS: DUAL SYSTEMS OF CONTROL

Şeriat and Kanun: Sacred Law and Sultanic Decree

The Ottoman legal system operated through two parallel and sometimes overlapping frameworks: şeriat (Islamic law derived from the Quran, hadith, and scholarly interpretation) and kanun (sultanic regulations addressing matters not covered by şeriat or requiring specific administrative rules). Understanding this duality is essential for grasping how the Ottoman state legitimized its authority while maintaining flexibility in governance.

Şeriat governed matters of personal status, family law, inheritance, commercial contracts, and certain criminal offenses. It was administered by kadis (judges) appointed by the state and overseen by the kazasker (military judges) who sat on the Imperial Council. The theoretical foundation held that şeriat was divine law, unchanging and perfect, derived from God's revelation. In practice, it was interpreted by ulema who were state employees with incentives to provide rulings that served Ottoman interests.

The flexibility within şeriat came through the doctrine of ijtihad (independent legal reasoning) and the recognition of multiple legal schools (madhahib). The Ottoman state officially followed the Hanafi school, which was generally regarded as the most flexible of the four major Sunni legal schools. When strict interpretation of one scholar or text proved inconvenient, kadis could reference alternative interpretations or different legal schools to reach desired outcomes. This created space for adaptation while maintaining the appearance of adherence to unchanging divine law.

Kanun filled gaps that şeriat left open or addressed practical administrative matters. Sultans issued kanunnames (law codes) covering taxation, land tenure, administrative procedures, criminal penalties for certain offenses, and organizational structures. The theoretical justification was that the Sultan, as God's shadow on earth and protector of Islam, had authority to issue regulations necessary for maintaining order and justice, provided they didn't contradict şeriat.

In practice, this meant the Sultan could create law extensively. The kanun of Mehmed II (Fatih Kanunnamesi, issued around 1477-1481) established rules for palace organization, succession, provincial administration, and criminal penalties. The kanun of Süleyman I (the Magnificent, reigned 1520-1566) codified land laws, taxation rates, and administrative procedures. These were comprehensive legal codes covering most aspects of governance.

The relationship between şeriat and kanun was theoretically hierarchical—şeriat was supreme, kanun was supplementary. But in practice, they often overlapped and sometimes contradicted each other. When conflicts arose, the outcome typically depended on political considerations rather than abstract legal hierarchy. If the Sultan wanted a particular outcome, ulema would provide fetvas legitimizing it within şeriat, or the Sultan would simply issue kanun overriding şeriat in that specific matter.

Criminal law particularly demonstrated this dual system's operation. Şeriat prescribed specific penalties for certain crimes—hadd punishments for theft, adultery, drinking alcohol, and apostasy. But enforcement was selective and political. Powerful individuals escaped hadd penalties that fell heavily on the poor. The Sultan could pardon offenders or commute sentences. And kanun created additional criminal categories with different penalties, particularly for offenses threatening state order like rebellion or currency counterfeiting.

The land tenure system exemplified how kanun created frameworks serving state interests that had no direct şeriat basis. The theoretical principle that all land belonged to the Sultan, with peasants holding only usage rights, derived from kanun not şeriat. Islamic law recognized private property in land, but Ottoman kanun overrode this to maintain state control over the primary productive asset. Kadis enforced these kanun provisions as if they were religiously sanctioned, demonstrating how the dual system functioned in practice to serve state power.

For non-Muslims, the situation was more complex. The millet system granted non-Muslim communities internal legal autonomy for personal status matters—Orthodox Christians were judged by Orthodox ecclesiastical courts, Armenians by Armenian courts, Jews by rabbinic courts. But commercial disputes, property matters, and criminal cases involving Muslims went to kadis applying şeriat (or kanun). This meant non-Muslims faced legal disadvantages—their testimony was weighted less than Muslims' testimony, they paid different taxes, and they couldn't enforce contracts against Muslims as effectively as Muslims could against them.

The legal framework's key characteristic was that it served elite interests while claiming divine sanction. Şeriat provided legitimacy—the empire governed according to God's law, not arbitrary human will. Kanun provided flexibility—the Sultan could adapt governance to changing circumstances without appearing to violate religion. Together, they created a system where elite extraction, violence, and control appeared natural, necessary, and divinely ordained.

Property law particularly demonstrated this pattern. The state claimed ultimate ownership of most land, preventing hereditary landed aristocracy from emerging to challenge sultanic authority. But tax farming and malikane (lifetime tax farm grants) created de facto property rights for those who served the state. Wealthy individuals accumulated estates (çiftliks) through

various legal mechanisms, establishing landed wealth that persisted across generations despite theoretical state ownership. The legal system was flexible enough to enable elite accumulation while preventing challenges to state supremacy.

Contract enforcement favored those with connections to power. Courts theoretically offered equal justice, but in practice, outcomes depended on status, wealth, and relationships. A wealthy merchant with connections to the kadi or provincial governor could win cases against poorer competitors. A timar-holder could extract payments from peasants using legal threats. A tax farmer could enforce collection through courts that backed state interests.

For our framework analysis, the dual legal system—şeriat plus kanun—represents institutional mechanisms that concentrated power while claiming religious legitimacy. The system was not neutral or objective but explicitly designed to serve elite interests. It prevented accumulation that might threaten the state while enabling accumulation by those who served the state. It provided ideological cover for extraction and violence. And it created hierarchies placing Muslims over non-Muslims, wealthy over poor, state officials over subjects.

When the Ottoman Empire collapsed and the Republic emerged with secular legal codes based on European models, the question would be whether new legal frameworks served similar functions—concentrating power, protecting elite property, legitimizing extraction—while claiming different sources of authority (popular sovereignty, national interest, modernization) rather than divine revelation.

Capitulations: Sovereignty Eroded by Treaties

The capitulations (ahidnameler, literally "documents of covenant") were treaties granting European powers and their subjects favorable commercial and legal privileges within Ottoman territories. While originally granted from positions of strength in the 16th century, capitulations became instruments of European economic penetration and erosion of Ottoman sovereignty by the 18th and 19th centuries. Understanding their evolution reveals how the Ottoman state's relationship with European powers transformed from confident imperial diplomacy to subordinate dependency.

The first major capitulation was granted to France in 1536 by Sultan Süleyman I during his alliance with France against the Habsburgs. The treaty granted French merchants reduced customs duties (typically 3-5 percent versus 10-20 percent for Ottoman subjects), extraterritorial legal rights (French subjects would be tried in French consular courts for most offenses rather than Ottoman courts), freedom to trade throughout the empire, and protection of French religious institutions in Ottoman territories.

From Süleyman's perspective, this was a calculated concession from strength. France was a useful ally against the Habsburgs who threatened Ottoman interests in the Mediterranean and Central Europe. The commercial advantages attracted French merchants whose trade generated customs revenue. The reduced tariff rates were offset by increased volume. And

Ottoman power was sufficient that French merchants operated at Ottoman sufferance, not as dominant actors.

Similar capitulations were granted to Venice, England, the Dutch Republic, and eventually most European powers. Each treaty contained similar provisions—reduced tariffs, extraterritorial legal jurisdiction, property rights for foreign merchants, and often clauses extending these privileges to local protégés (usually Christians who obtained foreign protection by serving as translators, agents, or merchants for European firms).

The system's problems emerged gradually. First, the capitulations were permanent or renewable at will—they weren't limited-term treaties requiring renegotiation. European powers could invoke them indefinitely while the Ottomans gained no reciprocal rights (Ottoman merchants in Europe received no equivalent privileges). Second, the privileges granted to one power were often automatically extended to others through "most favored nation" clauses, creating a ratchet effect where concessions multiplied. Third, European powers interpreted the capitulations expansively, claiming privileges beyond what the original treaties specified.

By the 18th century, capitulations had become serious economic handicaps. Foreign merchants paid lower tariffs than Ottoman subjects, giving them competitive advantages. They could import European manufactured goods at low cost while Ottoman artisans faced higher internal taxes. The number of Ottoman subjects claiming foreign protection exploded—by the 19th century, tens of thousands of Greeks, Armenians, and Jews held foreign protégé status, exempting them from Ottoman taxation and jurisdiction while residing in Ottoman territories.

The legal implications were particularly corrosive of sovereignty. Extraterritorial jurisdiction meant foreign subjects accused of crimes were tried in consular courts, not Ottoman courts. These courts applied European law, not Ottoman law, and often protected guilty parties. Murder cases involving foreigners became diplomatic incidents. Commercial disputes couldn't be adjudicated fairly when one party enjoyed legal immunity. And the system created two classes of residents—Ottoman subjects under Ottoman law, and foreign subjects (plus their protégés) under European law.

The economic consequences were devastating for Ottoman producers. European industrial goods flooded Ottoman markets at prices Ottoman artisans couldn't match, partly because of the tariff advantages capitulations granted. Ottoman manufacturing declined as European competition intensified. The empire's balance of trade shifted—it exported raw materials (silk, cotton, grain) and imported manufactured goods (textiles, metal products), the classic pattern of peripheral capitalism.

Attempts to reform or eliminate capitulations failed repeatedly. In the 19th century Tanzimat period, Ottoman reformers recognized that capitulations prevented economic development and eroded sovereignty. They attempted to negotiate new treaties eliminating extraterritorial jurisdiction and establishing equal tariff rates. European powers refused. They had too much invested—both commercial interests benefiting from privileges and geopolitical interests in maintaining Ottoman weakness.

The capitulations would persist until the empire's complete collapse after World War I. The Treaty of Lausanne (1923), negotiated by Mustafa Kemal's government, finally abolished capitulations and established Turkey's full sovereignty. But the century of capitulations (roughly 1820-1923) had profound effects. They prevented Ottoman industrial development, created a comprador class of foreign-protected merchants who profited from Ottoman subordination, demonstrated the state's inability to control its own economy, and established patterns of European economic domination that persisted even after legal abolition.

For our framework, capitulations represent how legal frameworks can transfer wealth from periphery to core through formal agreements rather than direct military conquest. The Ottoman state, in attempting to maintain diplomatic relationships and attract trade, granted concessions that over time became chains constraining development. This pattern—peripheral states granting "voluntary" concessions that lock them into subordinate positions—would be repeated globally through colonial treaties, development loans with conditions, structural adjustment programs, and trade agreements favoring core over periphery.

The question for Turkey's Republic would be whether abolishing capitulations legally would actually restore economic sovereignty, or whether patterns of dependency established during the capitulations era would persist through different mechanisms—foreign capital dominance, import dependency, debt relationships with European banks. The legal framework changed, but did the underlying power relationships?

Military Organization: Violence as State Function

The Ottoman legal and institutional framework rested ultimately on organized violence. The empire's military organization—from the Sultan's household troops to provincial cavalry to frontier irregulars—represented the violence monopoly that enforced elite power and extracted compliance from subject populations. Understanding this organization reveals how systematic violence was institutionalized and legally sanctioned.

The Janissaries (yeniçeri), recruited through the devşirme and trained as elite infantry, were the core of the standing army. By the mid-16th century, the Janissary corps numbered roughly 20,000-30,000 men organized into ortas (units of 100-500 soldiers). They received regular salaries from the treasury, lived in barracks in Constantinople and major cities, and trained continuously in firearms, archery, and close combat. Their discipline and firepower made them formidable—European observers consistently noted Janissaries' effectiveness in siege warfare and set-piece battles.

But the Janissaries' political role exceeded their military function. They were the Sultan's personal force, stationed in the capital, capable of making or breaking sultans through revolts. Janissary approval was necessary for major policy changes. Attempts to reform them or reduce their privileges triggered revolts that toppled grand viziers and occasionally sultans. Their barracks became centers of political activity, and their officers wielded influence far beyond their military rank.

The transformation of Janissaries from disciplined slave-soldiers to a hereditary military-political caste occurred gradually from the late 16th century onward. Restrictions on marriage were abandoned. Sons of Janissaries were admitted to the corps. Free Muslims bought their way in. By the 17th century, Janissary membership had become a form of hereditary privilege conveying tax exemptions, legal immunities, and political influence. The corps swelled to 50,000-100,000 or more, with many "Janissaries" never serving in campaigns but enjoying privileges.

This transformation had severe consequences. Military effectiveness declined as discipline eroded. Janissaries became reactionary forces opposing reforms that might threaten their privileges. They intervened repeatedly in politics, overthrowing reformist sultans or grand viziers. In 1826, Sultan Mahmud II would finally destroy the entire corps through the Auspicious Incident—when Janissaries revolted against military reforms, Mahmud's loyal forces massacred them, eliminating 10,000-20,000 Janissaries and destroying the institution that had defined Ottoman military power for four centuries.

The sipahi cavalry, holding timars in exchange for military service, constituted the second pillar of Ottoman military organization during the classical period. Perhaps 50,000-80,000 sipahis served in the 16th century, providing the mounted component of Ottoman armies. They appeared for campaigns when summoned, bringing retainers and equipment proportional to their timar values. In theory, this provided a large cavalry force at minimal cost to the treasury.

But the timar system's military effectiveness declined as warfare evolved. Firearms and artillery increasingly determined battles, not cavalry charges. Sipahis were reluctant to invest in firearms training when their status derived from horsemanship. Campaign lengths increased, making seasonal mobilization of timar cavalry impractical. And many timars were held by officials who never served militarily, using them purely as revenue sources.

Provincial forces—raised by governors and ayan (notables) from local populations—supplemented the standing forces. These varied enormously in quality and loyalty. Some were effective irregular cavalry (like the Crimean Tatars who raided into Russian and Polish territories). Others were barely trained local militias. Their loyalty was to whoever paid them, not necessarily to the Sultan. By the 18th century, powerful ayan maintained private armies larger than the Sultan could mobilize, effectively becoming warlords who nominally accepted Ottoman suzerainty while ruling autonomously.

Naval forces, particularly crucial for Mediterranean control, underwent similar transformations. The Ottoman fleet in the 16th century was formidable—it challenged Venice, Spain, and Genoa for Mediterranean dominance. But naval power required constant investment in ships, training, and dockyards. By the 18th century, the Ottoman navy had fallen far behind European naval powers in both numbers and technology. North African corsair fleets (operating under loose Ottoman suzerainty in Algeria, Tunisia, Tripoli) became more important than the imperial fleet itself.

The military organization's legal framework justified and enabled systematic violence. Military law (kanun-i askeri) governed soldiers' conduct, prescribing harsh penalties for desertion, cowardice, or disobedience. But it also granted soldiers privileges—tax exemptions, legal immunities, rights to booty during campaigns. The campaign system itself was legalized extraction—when Ottoman armies campaigned in Christian territories, seizure of slaves, looting of property, and appropriation of land were legal and expected practices.

Garrison forces stationed throughout the empire maintained order and enforced state authority. They suppressed bandits, collected taxes when civil authorities faced resistance, intimidated local populations, and crushed peasant rebellions. The Celali Rebellions' suppression in the early 17th century exemplified this pattern—armies burned villages, executed rebel leaders, and forcibly returned peasants to land they had fled. This violence wasn't exceptional or illegal—it was authorized enforcement of state order.

For Christians and other non-Muslims, military service was generally prohibited (with some exceptions for auxiliary forces and naval rowers). This reinforced the hierarchy placing Muslims above non-Muslims—bearing arms was a Muslim privilege. Non-Muslims paid jizya partly as compensation for not serving militarily and partly as mark of subordination. The devşirme system represented a partial exception—Christian boys converted to Islam became soldiers—but this exception reinforced the rule by demonstrating that military service required Muslim identity.

The military organization represented the violence monopoly essential to elite power. It conquered territories, extracted tribute, suppressed resistance, and enforced elite authority. Its legal framework sanctioned this violence as necessary for order, defense of Islam, and maintenance of justice. And its institutional structure—combining standing forces (Janissaries) paid by the state, provincial cavalry (sipahis) supported by land grants, and irregular forces raised by local notables—created a military establishment that both served and constrained sultanic authority.

For our framework analysis, the military institution demonstrates how violence monopoly was organized, legalized, and employed to maintain extraction. When the Republic emerged, it would create a new military institution (conscript national army) with different organization but similar functions—suppressing internal resistance, enforcing state authority, and serving as guarantor of elite power. Tracking continuity requires asking whether the violence monopoly persisted across regime change even as the specific military institutions transformed.

VI. WEALTH EXTRACTION MECHANISMS: QUANTIFYING THE FLOW

Revenue Sources and Scales

Understanding the Ottoman economy requires moving beyond qualitative descriptions to quantify wealth extraction. How much revenue did the state extract? From whom? Through what mechanisms? While precise figures are impossible to establish for much of the period (record-keeping was inconsistent, many transactions occurred informally, and monetary values fluctuated), estimates based on Ottoman fiscal documents, European observers' accounts, and economic historians' reconstructions provide rough magnitudes.

At the empire's height in the mid-16th century under Süleyman I, the central treasury's annual revenue was approximately 250-300 million akçe. To understand this magnitude, contemporary wages and prices provide context. A skilled artisan in Constantinople earned roughly 5-7 akçe per day, or about 1,500-2,000 akçe annually. A common soldier's pay was similar. Agricultural day laborers earned less, perhaps 2-3 akçe daily. A good horse cost 2,000-5,000 akçe. A modest house in a provincial town might cost 10,000-30,000 akçe.

This means the central treasury's annual revenue was equivalent to roughly 125,000-200,000 skilled workers' annual incomes. In a total population of perhaps 15-20 million in the mid-16th century, this represented extraordinary concentration of resources. But the central treasury captured only part of total extraction—timar revenues went to sipahis rather than the treasury, local officials extracted fees and bribes, religious endowments (waqf) controlled substantial wealth, and various other mechanisms siphoned resources before they reached Constantinople.

The revenue sources broke down roughly as follows (estimates for mid-16th century):

Land taxes and agricultural levies: 40-50 percent of central treasury revenue (100-150 million akçe). This included the çift tax on peasant households, tithe on harvests (öşür), and various fees. These fell primarily on the peasantry, both Muslim and non-Muslim, though non-Muslims paid additional agricultural taxes in some regions.

Jizya (poll tax on non-Muslims): 10-15 percent (25-40 million akçe). Every non-Muslim male of working age paid this tax annually, the rate varying by wealth category. The symbolic significance exceeded the fiscal importance—it marked non-Muslims as subordinate while generating substantial revenue from the empire's large Christian and Jewish populations.

Customs and commercial taxes: 15-25 percent (40-75 million akçe). Tariffs on imports and exports, market fees, transit fees, and taxes on urban commerce generated significant revenue, particularly from the empire's position astride trade routes between Europe and Asia. The capitulations' reduced tariff rates for European merchants reduced this revenue over time.

Extraordinary levies and confiscations: 10-20 percent (25-60 million akçe). This included emergency taxes during wars (avariz), confiscations of property from executed officials or deceased wealthy individuals (müsadere), and various irregular extractions. The uncertainty of this revenue source made it unreliable for regular expenditures but provided windfalls during crises.

Mines, monopolies, and state enterprises: 10-15 percent (25-45 million akçe). Salt monopolies, silver and gold mines (particularly in the Balkans), and state-controlled manufacturing provided steady revenue.

The central treasury's total revenue was only part of the extraction system. Timar revenues—the taxes collected by sipahis from their granted territories—probably equaled or exceeded the central treasury's income. If 50,000 sipahis held timars averaging 6,000-10,000 akçe annually (a rough estimate), this represented 300-500 million akçe flowing to the military elite without passing through the central treasury. This doesn't count the larger ziamets and has holdings which were substantially more valuable.

Religious endowments (waqfs) controlled perhaps 20-30 percent of all agricultural land by the 16th century, generating revenues that supported mosques, madrasas, hospitals, and other charitable institutions but also enriched their administrators and founders' descendants who often served as trustees. Waqf revenues might have totaled 100-200 million akçe annually, none of which went to the central treasury.

Tax farming revenues exceeded the contracted amounts by substantial margins—the difference between what tax farmers paid the state and what they collected from populations was the tax farmers' profit. If tax farmers paid the state 100 million akçe but collected 150 million, that 50 million margin represented pure extraction enriching the tax farming class.

Local officials—kadis, governors, garrison commanders—extracted fees, bribes, and informal payments that never appeared in any accounts. A kadi might charge fees for legal judgments, a governor might demand "gifts" from merchants seeking licenses, a garrison commander might extort payments from villages as "protection." These extractions were ubiquitous but unquantifiable.

Combining all sources, the total extraction from the Ottoman economy in the mid-16th century was probably 700-1,000 million akçe annually from a population of 15-20 million. This represented roughly 25-35 percent of total economic output, comparable to modern developed states' tax burdens but with crucial differences—Ottoman extraction was regressive (falling heaviest on peasants), non-redistributive (almost none went to social welfare), and concentrated in elite hands rather than providing public goods.

The distribution of extracted wealth reveals the system's character. The Sultan and central state apparatus consumed perhaps 250-300 million akçe. The timar-holding military elite received 300-500 million akçe. Religious institutions controlled 100-200 million akçe. Tax farmers, local officials, and corrupt practices siphoned off another 100-200 million akçe. What remained for productive investment or public goods was minimal—the empire built impressive mosques and palaces but invested little in agricultural improvement, infrastructure benefiting peasants, or technological development.

The Tributary System and Colonial Extraction

Beyond direct taxation of Ottoman subjects, the empire extracted wealth from tributary relationships and colonial possessions. Understanding these flows reveals how Ottoman wealth concentration depended partly on external extraction, presaging later patterns of core-periphery relationships.

Various territories paid tribute while maintaining nominal autonomy—Wallachia and Moldavia (in modern Romania), Transylvania (in modern Hungary), the Crimean Khanate, several North African states, and at various times Yemen, parts of the Arabian Peninsula, and Caucasian principalities. The tribute amounts varied based on negotiations, military pressure, and local wealth, but collectively they added substantial revenue.

Wallachia and Moldavia, for example, paid annual tributes of roughly 10,000-30,000 gold ducats each in the 16th century (one gold ducat was worth approximately 60-70 akçe), totaling perhaps 1-3 million akçe. This doesn't seem enormous relative to total imperial revenue, but tribute came with minimal administrative costs—the empire didn't garrison forces, didn't administer directly, and simply collected payment. The tributary princes governed locally, extracted resources from their populations, and transferred portions to Constantinople.

The Crimean Khanate's relationship was more complex—it paid token tribute but was essentially an Ottoman client that conducted slave raids into Russian and Polish territories, selling captives in Ottoman markets. The revenues from slave sales (which went to Crimean Tatars and slave traders, not the Ottoman treasury) still represented Ottoman-facilitated extraction, and Crimean forces often campaigned alongside Ottoman armies without requiring payment from the imperial treasury.

Egypt, conquered in 1517, became the empire's wealthiest province. The Ottoman governor (pasha) sent annual tribute (haraç) to Constantinople of 3-4 million gold ducats (180-280 million akçe) in the 16th century—more than the central treasury's total revenue from some regions. Egypt's agricultural productivity, position astride Red Sea trade routes, and large population made it extraordinarily valuable. The Ottoman administration in Egypt was particularly extractive—Mamluk landholding structures persisted with Ottoman officials sitting atop them, extracting surplus through tax farming and tribute.

The North African provinces (Algeria, Tunisia, Tripoli) operated semi-autonomously under Ottoman suzerainty, their corsair fleets raiding European shipping and coastal towns, enslaving Christians, and selling captives. The Ottoman state didn't directly administer these territories but benefited from their military contributions (naval forces during campaigns) and the political advantage of having bases threatening European commerce.

This tributary and colonial extraction system had several characteristics. First, it was opportunistic rather than systematically administered—the empire established relationships based on military capacity and local conditions rather than implementing uniform colonial governance. Second, it concentrated wealth in Constantinople and enriched intermediaries (tributary princes, Egyptian Mamluks, Algerian corsairs) who served Ottoman interests while accumulating local power. Third, it enabled the Ottoman state to maintain a larger imperial

presence than its direct administrative capacity would support—tributary relationships extended Ottoman reach without requiring extensive bureaucracy.

For our framework, this tributary extraction demonstrates that Ottoman wealth concentration depended partly on transfers from periphery to core, a pattern recognizable in later European colonial empires and contemporary global capitalism. The specific mechanisms differed—tribute rather than colonial administration, irregular extraction rather than systematic plantation agriculture—but the function was identical: peripheral populations worked, core elites accumulated.

Military Booty and Slavery's Economic Role

Ottoman military campaigns were not purely strategic or defensive—they were profit-making enterprises where soldiers expected to enrich themselves through booty and enslavement. Understanding warfare's extractive economics is essential to grasping the empire's wealth accumulation mechanisms.

Campaign booty followed prescribed rules. The Islamic legal framework held that one-fifth of war booty (khums) belonged to the state, with the remainder distributed among soldiers proportional to rank and contribution. In practice, this meant common soldiers received small shares, officers received larger shares, and commanders accumulated substantial wealth from successful campaigns.

During the conquest of Constantinople (1453), Mehmed II reportedly received one-fifth of all seized property as his right, while his commanders divided much of the rest. The total value is impossible to determine precisely, but contemporary sources describe massive quantities of gold, silver, religious treasures, silk fabrics, and other valuables appropriated. Similar patterns occurred in other conquests—Belgrade (1521), Rhodes (1522), Buda (1541), and numerous smaller towns and cities.

Enslavement represented perhaps the most important economic component of campaigns. Soldiers could keep or sell captives taken during conquest. A healthy young male slave might sell for 3,000-8,000 akçe in Constantinople's slave markets (equivalent to two to four years' wages for a skilled artisan). A campaign capturing 10,000 people (not unusual in major sieges) generated perhaps 30-80 million akçe in slave sales, with the Sultan's treasury receiving one-fifth and soldiers keeping the rest.

The Janissaries' effectiveness partly derived from this profit motive. They fought fiercely not from religious fanaticism or national loyalty but because successful campaigns meant booty and slaves. Officers could accumulate enough from several campaigns to purchase estates and retire wealthy. Even common soldiers supplemented their modest salaries substantially through warfare's profits.

Land grants to soldiers and officials after conquests represented another form of booty. Conquered territories were distributed as timars, ziamets, and has, creating instant wealth for

recipients. The conquest of Egypt (1517) generated hundreds of new revenue assignments enriching Ottoman officials. The Balkan conquests created thousands of timars. This distributed wealth among the military elite while ensuring they had stakes in maintaining the conquest.

The economic incentive structure meant the Ottoman military constantly sought expansion. Soldiers pressed for campaigns because they needed booty to supplement inadequate pay. The treasury needed campaigns because one-fifth of booty supplemented tax revenues. Commanders needed victories to gain prestige, promotions, and larger revenue assignments. This created systemic pressure toward perpetual warfare.

When expansion stopped (roughly by the late 16th to early 17th century as the empire reached its geographic limits), this incentive structure collapsed. Soldiers couldn't enrich themselves through booty. The treasury couldn't supplement revenues through conquest. Commanders fought defensive campaigns that generated costs without profits. This contributed to the military system's gradual deterioration and the state's fiscal crises in the 17th century.

For our framework, warfare's extractive economics demonstrates that Ottoman wealth accumulation depended partly on violent appropriation from conquered populations. The empire wasn't simply defending against external threats—it was systematically extracting wealth through organized military violence. When geographical expansion ended, the empire had to rely more heavily on internal extraction, increasing pressure on subject populations and contributing to various crises.

Capital Flight and Elite Wealth Preservation

While the state extracted wealth systematically, elites also engaged in wealth preservation strategies that limited productive investment. Understanding these mechanisms reveals another dimension of how the economic system functioned.

The practice of müsadere (confiscation) created powerful incentives for elites to hide wealth or convert it into forms resistant to seizure. Grand viziers, provincial governors, and wealthy merchants knew their fortunes could be confiscated upon death or fall from favor. This encouraged strategies that reduced economic efficiency but protected wealth.

One common strategy was converting wealth into jewelry, precious metals, and other portable valuables that could be hidden or moved quickly. Rather than investing in land improvements, manufacturing, or trade infrastructure (all visible and immobile), elites accumulated gold, silver, gems, and luxury goods. This sterilized capital that might otherwise have been productively invested.

Another strategy was establishing waqfs (charitable foundations). Islamic law made waqf property inalienable—once designated as waqf, property couldn't be sold, confiscated, or divided among heirs. In theory, waqf property supported charitable activities (mosques, schools, hospitals). In practice, wealthy individuals established waqfs naming themselves and their

descendants as administrators, creating tax-exempt family trusts that preserved wealth across generations while appearing charitable.

By the 16th century, perhaps 20-30 percent of all productive land was waqf property. This represented an enormous diversion of resources from potentially taxable and economically productive use to tax-exempt, often inefficiently managed estates. The elite who controlled waqfs as administrators enjoyed incomes without contributing to state revenue and without market pressure to use property efficiently.

Capital flight to foreign territories represented another wealth preservation mechanism. Wealthy Ottoman merchants and officials invested in European financial instruments, purchased property in European cities, or deposited gold with European bankers. This removed capital from Ottoman territories, reducing productive investment domestically while enriching European economies.

The insecurity of property rights meant Ottoman capital markets remained underdeveloped. Why lend money long-term when the borrower might be executed and property confiscated, leaving loans unrecoverable? Why invest in a business partnership when political changes might destroy the partner's position? The rational response was to keep wealth liquid, hidden, and mobile—exactly the opposite of the long-term productive investment that drives economic development.

This created a vicious cycle. State predation on wealth drove elites to hide capital and avoid productive investment. The resulting economic stagnation reduced tax revenues. The state responded by intensifying predation through confiscations, tax farming, and extraordinary levies. This further discouraged investment, perpetuating underdevelopment.

For comparison, European states were simultaneously developing institutions protecting property rights, enabling capital accumulation, and facilitating productive investment. The Dutch East India Company mobilized massive capital through stock sales that protected investors through corporate structures limiting liability. English merchants organized joint-stock companies backed by royal charters guaranteeing property rights. Banks developed instruments enabling credit across borders and time.

The Ottoman Empire had none of this. Property was insecure. Corporate structures didn't exist. Banking was primitive. Capital markets were undeveloped. The rational elite strategy was wealth preservation through hiding and consumption rather than productive investment. This helps explain why the empire, despite controlling wealthy territories and extensive trade networks, never developed indigenous industrial capitalism.

For our framework, this demonstrates how elite extraction can undermine long-term development even when it enriches individual elites in the short term. The Ottoman state's predation on wealth created incentives that prevented capital accumulation necessary for industrialization. When European industrial goods flooded Ottoman markets in the 19th century,

the empire lacked the accumulated capital, institutional frameworks, and productive infrastructure to compete.

VII. NARRATIVE CONSTRUCTION: IDEOLOGY AS EXTRACTION'S JUSTIFICATION

Jihad Ideology and Holy War Rhetoric

The Ottoman Empire presented itself as Islam's champion and defender, with military expansion framed as jihad (holy struggle) rather than conquest for material gain. Understanding this ideological framework reveals how religious narrative justified systematic violence and extraction.

The concept of jihad in Islamic theology is complex and contested, encompassing both spiritual struggle and military action to defend or expand Islamic territory. Ottoman ideologues emphasized the military dimension, presenting the Sultan as ghazi (warrior for the faith) and Ottoman campaigns as defense of Islam against infidels.

This narrative served multiple functions. It legitimized Ottoman expansion—conquering Christian territories wasn't aggression but religiously mandated defense and expansion of Islam. It motivated soldiers—fighting for the faith offered both material rewards (booty, slaves) and spiritual rewards (martyrdom bringing paradise). It unified diverse Muslim populations under Ottoman rule—Turks, Arabs, Kurds, and others could identify as participants in a sacred mission transcending ethnic divisions. And it provided ideological cover for extraction—non-Muslims conquered through jihad became dhimmis (protected people) whose subordinate status and jizya payment were justified as Islamic law's requirements.

The Sultan's titles reflected this ideology. "Servant of the Two Holy Sanctuaries" (referring to Mecca and Medina, which came under Ottoman protection after the conquest of Egypt in 1517) claimed leadership of the entire Muslim world. "Shadow of God on Earth" asserted divine authority. "Padishah" (emperor) and "Sultan" claimed universal sovereignty. These weren't empty rhetoric—they were ideological assertions of right to rule, backed by religious authority.

Court chroniclers and historians produced narratives emphasizing Ottoman victories as divine favor. Defeats were explained as God testing the faithful or as punishment for straying from righteous paths. The massive historical work of Selaniki (late 16th century) presented Ottoman expansion as providential, with Mehmed II's conquest of Constantinople fulfilling Islamic prophecies. Such narratives weren't just propaganda—they shaped how elites understood their role and justified their actions.

The jihad framework also provided legal-religious justification for enslavement. Islamic law permitted enslaving captives taken in warfare against non-Muslims, treating them as spoils of

war. The devşirme system, while practiced only against Christian subjects (which violated Islamic law's prohibition on enslaving dhimmis), was presented as a form of conversion that elevated Christian boys into the faith while serving the empire. The cognitive dissonance was resolved through selective interpretation—the boys were being saved from unbelief even as they were torn from families.

But jihad ideology had limits as motivational force. When campaigns turned defensive in the late 16th and 17th centuries—fighting to hold territories rather than conquer new ones—the jihad framework became less compelling. Soldiers fighting Safavid Persia (a Muslim power, albeit Shi'a rather than Sunni) couldn't claim to be battling infidels. Campaigns in Yemen or North Africa against Muslim rebels or competitors couldn't be presented as holy war.

The ideology also created tensions. If the empire was Islam's defender, why did it ally with Christian powers like France against Muslim powers like Persia? If the Sultan was the ghazi, why did he grant capitulations giving Christians economic advantages over Muslims? These contradictions were managed through selective emphasis and creative interpretation, but they revealed the gap between ideological claims and political realities.

For non-Muslims, jihad ideology justified their subordination. They had been conquered through legitimate holy war, making their dhimmi status legally and religiously proper. The jizya they paid wasn't arbitrary taxation but religiously prescribed acknowledgment of Islam's supremacy. Restrictions on church building, weapons carrying, and dress weren't oppression but implementation of God's law as interpreted by ulema.

For our framework, jihad ideology represents the information control component of elite power. Religious narratives legitimized extraction, violence, and hierarchy by presenting them as divinely ordained. Populations internalized these frameworks, making resistance seem not just politically dangerous but religiously illegitimate. The ideology served elite interests by preventing questioning of the system's fundamental premises.

When the empire collapsed and the secular Turkish Republic emerged, the question would be whether secular nationalist ideology would serve similar functions—legitimizing extraction, justifying hierarchy, preventing resistance—while claiming different sources of authority (national interest, modernization, Turkish identity) rather than Islamic law.

The Millet System as Divide-and-Rule Ideology

The ideological justification for the millet system presented it as benevolent tolerance—the Sultan generously allowed non-Muslims to practice their religions while governing them through their own leaders. This narrative obscured the system's actual function as mechanism for preventing unified resistance through institutionalized division.

The rhetoric emphasized Islamic magnanimity. Islam, as a perfected revelation, was confident enough to allow Christians and Jews to maintain their imperfect faiths. The Sultan, as God's shadow on earth, protected all his subjects regardless of religion. The millet leaders were

honored servants entrusted with guiding their communities toward righteous living (within the constraints of Islamic supremacy).

This narrative created several effects. It made subordination appear as privilege—"we allow you to govern yourselves" rather than "we've conquered you and extracted tribute." It placed responsibility for communal welfare on millet leaders rather than the state—if Christians suffered, it was their Patriarch's failure, not Ottoman oppression. It encouraged competition between communities for Ottoman favor rather than cooperation against Ottoman rule. And it prevented the development of cross-communal identities that might challenge Islamic supremacy.

The millet system's ideological framework also shaped how non-Muslims understood their own positions. Orthodox Christians were taught by their clergy that submission to Muslim rule was temporary, a test of faith that God would eventually end. But they were also taught to accept their current subordination as God's will—perhaps punishment for sins, perhaps providential preparation for future redemption. Either interpretation counseled acceptance rather than resistance.

Similarly, Jews understood their dhimmi status through theological frameworks emphasizing exile as divine punishment for ancient transgressions, with redemption awaiting the Messiah's arrival. This framework made their subordination seem religiously meaningful rather than politically contingent. It created patience for divine intervention rather than human action to change conditions.

The millet system also produced material benefits for non-Muslim elites that created stakes in the system's preservation. The Greek Orthodox Patriarch controlled substantial wealth through church properties and tax collection privileges. The Armenian Patriarch and Chief Rabbi wielded similar authority. These positions were prestigious and lucrative. Millet leaders had strong incentives to maintain the system rather than challenge it—their power derived from Ottoman recognition.

This created a conservative force within non-Muslim communities. Radical critics who questioned the system could be suppressed by millet leaders invoking religious authority. Nationalist movements that emerged in the 19th century faced opposition not only from Ottoman authorities but from traditional religious leaders who had invested interests in the millet system.

The ideological construction of the millet system as tolerant multiculturalism has persisted in some Ottoman nostalgia narratives, particularly those contrasting Ottoman "tolerance" with European religious wars and persecution. This obscures the system's hierarchical reality—Muslims enjoyed superior status, non-Muslims faced legal disabilities and periodic violence, and the "tolerance" was predicated on non-Muslims accepting subordination.

For our framework, the millet system's ideology demonstrates how seemingly benign or even progressive frameworks (religious toleration, communal autonomy) can serve elite interests by fragmenting potential resistance and legitimizing hierarchy. The system prevented the class

solidarity that might have united Muslim and Christian peasants against elite extraction by maintaining religious divisions as primary identities.

When nationalist movements emerged in the 19th and 20th centuries, they built on these millet-based identities. Greeks defined themselves as Orthodox Christians, Armenians as Armenian Christians, with nationalism growing from religious communalism rather than transcending it. The resulting nationalist conflicts and genocidal violence were partly products of the millet system's centuries-long institutionalization of religious division.

Imperial Magnificence and Sultanic Mystique

The Ottoman court cultivated an ideology of imperial magnificence designed to awe subjects and foreign visitors while legitimizing elite extraction through displays of wealth and power. Understanding this symbolic politics reveals another dimension of how the system maintained itself.

The Topkapı Palace, constructed after Constantinople's conquest and expanded over centuries, was not merely a residence but an ideological statement. Its scale, architectural splendor, gardens, treasures, and elaborate court rituals demonstrated Ottoman power and wealth. Foreign ambassadors were deliberately overwhelmed by processions through multiple courtyards, past Janissary guards, toward the throne room where the Sultan sat in splendor.

These displays served practical purposes. They created psychological effects—subjects and foreigners alike internalized Ottoman power as natural and unchallengeable when confronted with such magnificence. They demonstrated the empire's wealth, suggesting military and economic capacity. They elevated the Sultan above ordinary humanity—he was not simply a ruler but a semi-divine figure whose authority was self-evident.

Court ceremony reinforced this mystique. The Sultan rarely appeared in public, creating scarcity that made appearances meaningful. When he did appear—leading Friday prayers, receiving ambassadors, reviewing troops—the ritual was elaborately choreographed. Subjects prostrated themselves. Officials maintained strict protocols regarding who could stand where and speak when. Violations were punished severely.

The imperial treasury's contents demonstrated wealth accumulation. Room after room held gold, silver, jewels, weapons encrusted with precious stones, religious relics, gifts from foreign rulers. These weren't merely stored—they were displayed to visiting dignitaries, described in chronicles, and incorporated into ritual. They proved the empire's capacity to accumulate and its right to extract.

Military reviews and victory celebrations served similar functions. When armies returned victorious, elaborate processions through Constantinople displayed captured treasures, prisoners, and tribute. These public spectacles reminded populations of Ottoman military power while demonstrating that extraction and violence produced glory and wealth. Participation was

mandatory for various groups—guilds, Janissaries, officials—creating collective rituals that reinforced hierarchy.

The Sultan's titles and genealogies were carefully constructed and publicized. Court chroniclers traced Ottoman lineage to various prestigious sources—sometimes to Noah through Japeth, sometimes to Turkish tribal leaders, sometimes emphasizing descent from Islamic prophets or caliphs. The point wasn't historical accuracy but legitimating claims to universal sovereignty. If the Sultan descended from Noah, his rule over all humanity was biblically sanctioned. If he descended from Osman, his rule over Turkish tribes was historically justified. If he descended from the Prophet Muhammad's clan, his role as Islam's defender was genealogically proven.

This ideological construction required constant maintenance. Chroniclers wrote approved histories. Poets composed panegyrics praising the Sultan's wisdom, justice, and power. Architects designed buildings embodying imperial grandeur. Artists created miniatures and calligraphy celebrating Ottoman achievements. This cultural production wasn't autonomous—it was patronized, directed, and censored to serve the empire's ideological needs.

For subjects, this magnificence created complex psychological effects. On one level, it inspired pride—"we" are part of this powerful empire. On another level, it reinforced powerlessness—such wealth and power are so far beyond ordinary people that challenging them seems absurd. The ideology naturalized inequality—if the Sultan is semi-divine, if the empire is providentially ordained, if magnificence demonstrates divine favor, then questioning the system questions God's will.

For our framework, imperial magnificence ideology demonstrates how cultural and symbolic production serves elite power by creating psychological effects that discourage resistance. The same pattern appears in all hierarchical systems—from Versailles to the Forbidden City to contemporary displays of billionaire wealth. The message is always similar: power is natural, resistance is futile, hierarchy is either divinely ordained or meritocratically earned.

When the Ottoman Empire collapsed, the Turkish Republic would initially reject imperial magnificence in favor of republican modesty—Atatürk wore simple suits, the government operated from Ankara not Istanbul, palaces became museums. But the underlying pattern of symbolic politics serving elite power would persist through different forms—nationalist symbols, modernization narratives, military parades, monuments to republican achievements.

VIII. ASSESSMENT: THE OTTOMAN SYSTEM 1299-1650

Elite Structure Consolidated

By the mid-17th century, after three and a half centuries of development, the Ottoman Empire had constructed a sophisticated system for concentrating wealth and power in elite hands while

preventing challenges to their authority. Understanding the system's structure by 1650 establishes baseline patterns that we can track through subsequent transformations.

The elite structure had evolved from its origins. The early Ottoman beylik (1299-1453) had been relatively simple—a warrior chief (Osman and his early successors) leading tribal followers in frontier warfare, accumulating wealth through booty and tribute, distributing it to maintain loyalty. By 1650, the structure was far more complex and institutionalized.

The Sultan sat at the apex, theoretically possessing absolute power. But sultanic authority was real only when individual sultans were capable and active. The transformation from warrior-sultans who personally led campaigns (Mehmed II, Selim I, Süleyman I) to palace-raised sultans who ruled through officials fundamentally changed governance. By the 17th century, many sultans were figureheads, with power exercised by grand viziers, Valide Sultans (sultan's mothers), and palace factions.

The devşirme-educated slave elite had dominated the highest positions from the mid-15th through early 17th century. Grand viziers, provincial governors, and Janissary officers were overwhelmingly products of this system. They owed everything to the Sultan and could be destroyed at his whim, making them dependent and (theoretically) loyal. But by the mid-17th century, this system was eroding. Free-born Muslims increasingly filled elite positions. The Janissaries had become hereditary. The Palace School still existed but no longer monopolized elite recruitment.

The provincial notable class (ayan) had risen to prominence through tax farming and local power accumulation. By 1650, powerful ayan families controlled regions semi-autonomously, maintaining private armies, extracting revenue, and negotiating with the central state rather than simply obeying. They represented a provincial elite whose power derived from local resource control rather than state appointment—making them more durable than the devşirme elite whose power was entirely dependent on central authority.

The ulema class had consolidated its position as the guardian of religious law and education. The hierarchy from Şeyhülislam down through kadis to local imams represented a parallel elite structure to the military-administrative elite. The ulema were integrated into the state—appointed by the Sultan, paid by the treasury or waqfs—but they also possessed independent sources of authority through religious knowledge and community respect. This gave them more autonomy than slave officials but less than ayan notables.

Merchant and artisan elites existed but remained subordinate to and dependent on these other elite groups. Wealthy merchants accumulated capital but faced confiscation risk, preventing them from challenging state power. Artisan guild leaders had local authority but were constrained by state regulations and military power. Neither group could accumulate enough power to seriously challenge the military-administrative-religious elite coalition.

The elite coordination mechanisms had evolved to manage this complex structure. The Divan coordinated central administration when functioning effectively. The timar system (declining by

1650) had coordinated military-administrative elite with clear hierarchy of revenue grants. Tax farming and malikane created networks of revenue contractors tied to the state through financial relationships. The ulema hierarchy coordinated religious authority. These mechanisms enabled collective elite action—suppressing rebellions, conducting campaigns, extracting revenue—while preventing unified elite opposition to sultanic authority (though increasingly, sultans themselves were weak and controlled by elite factions).

The Three Monopolies Established

By 1650, the Ottoman elite had consolidated control over the three monopolies essential to sustained power: wealth, violence, and information.

The wealth monopoly was thorough though distributed among elite fractions. The state (represented by the Sultan and central treasury) claimed theoretical ownership of all land, preventing hereditary landed aristocracy from accumulating autonomous power. In practice, land control was distributed through timars (declining), tax farms (increasing), çiftlik estates (emerging), and waqfs (extensive). But all these mechanisms concentrated land control in elite hands—sipahis, tax farmers, state officials, waqf administrators, and ayan notables. The peasantry had usage rights but not ownership, ensuring their subordination and extraction.

Urban property and commerce were similarly controlled. Guild regulations restricted entry into trades, benefiting established artisans while preventing worker organization. Waqf ownership of urban property meant much housing and commercial space was controlled by religious institutions serving elite interests. Merchant capital existed but was insecure and subordinate to state power, as the practice of müsadere demonstrated.

The total wealth concentration is difficult to quantify precisely, but rough estimates suggest the top 5-10 percent of the population controlled 60-80 percent of all wealth by 1650. This included the Sultan's household, high officials, provincial ayan, wealthy ulema, tax farmers, and the richest merchants. The vast majority—peasants, urban workers, artisans, soldiers—owned little beyond basic tools and household goods.

The violence monopoly was complete. The state controlled all organized armed forces—Janissaries, provincial cavalry, garrison troops, naval forces. Private armies existed (ayan forces, bandit groups) but only at the state's sufferance or in opposition to the state (in which case they were hunted down and destroyed). Peasants were disarmed—carrying weapons was a privilege restricted to military personnel and free Muslims of sufficient status. Non-Muslims were particularly prohibited from bearing arms, enforcing their subordination.

The violence monopoly enabled all other forms of extraction. Tax collection backed by threat of force, peasant labor enforced through legal restrictions and military suppression of flight, commercial regulations maintained through garrison troops, confiscation executed by armed officials—all depended on the state's exclusive control of organized violence. Resistance was crushed systematically, as the suppression of the Celali Rebellions demonstrated.

The information monopoly was exercised through the ulema's control of education and religious authority. Madrasas taught religious sciences and socialized students into accepting hierarchy. Friday sermons propagated state-approved messages. Fetvas legitimized state actions through religious authority. Printing was prohibited (until 1727 for Muslim subjects), limiting information dissemination. Foreign books were restricted. The ulema censored ideas deemed heretical or politically dangerous.

For non-Muslims, the millet system placed religious authorities in similar positions—the Patriarch controlled Orthodox education, the Chief Rabbi controlled Jewish education. All taught acceptance of the existing order even as they maintained distinct communal identities. The combination of religious control and millet divisions prevented the spread of ideas that might challenge elite power.

This information monopoly wasn't total—forbidden ideas circulated, heretical sects emerged, resistance ideologies developed. But the dominant ideological frameworks—Islam's teachings on authority, the millet system's communal divisions, the jihad narrative legitimizing expansion, the imperial magnificence demonstrating Ottoman power—all supported elite interests. Populations overwhelmingly internalized worldviews that made resistance seem either impossible or illegitimate.

Material Outcomes and Exploitation

The system's consequences for ordinary people establish what the elite power structure produced. By 1650, the Ottoman Empire had created extraordinary inequality and widespread poverty alongside elite magnificence.

Peasant conditions varied by region and period but generally involved lives of subsistence labor, heavy taxation, legal subordination, and periodic violence. A typical peasant family cultivated land they didn't own, paid 30-40 percent of production in various taxes, faced legal restrictions on mobility, and could expect little improvement across generations. Life expectancy was perhaps 30-35 years, with infant mortality above 30 percent and maternal mortality high. Famines occurred periodically, often caused by military requisitions or tax extraction rather than natural disasters. Plague outbreaks devastated populations repeatedly through the 16th and 17th centuries.

Urban workers faced different but comparable hardships. Artisans in guilds enjoyed some security if established but faced restrictions preventing advancement or innovation. Day laborers earned subsistence wages working in construction, transport, or services. Many urban residents lived in poverty, depending on charity from waqfs or mosque distributions. Housing was crowded and unsanitary. Disease was endemic.

Slaves, whether household servants or military personnel, had no legal rights and could be beaten, sold, or killed at owner's discretion. While some slaves (particularly elite kul) achieved high status, the vast majority lived subordinate lives of labor and service. The trauma of

enslavement—being captured in war, purchased in markets, separated from families—was universal.

Non-Muslims faced additional burdens. The jizya, legal disabilities, restrictions on dress and building, periodic violence during times of crisis, and constant reminders of subordinate status created lives of insecurity. Conversion to Islam offered escape from these burdens, creating steady pressure toward religious homogenization that gradually reduced Christian populations in Anatolia and increased them in the Balkans (where large Christian populations persisted into the 20th century).

In contrast, the elite lived lives of extraordinary luxury. The Sultan's palaces, the estates of grand viziers, the mansions of wealthy ayan, the properties of rich merchants—all displayed wealth on scales incomprehensible to ordinary subjects. High officials received gifts of thousands of gold ducats. Successful tax farmers accumulated estates worth millions of akçe. Provincial ayan commanded private armies and ruled territories like feudal lords.

The gap between elite and masses was not merely economic but encompassed every dimension of existence. Elites lived 20-30 years longer, ate better food, wore finer clothes, lived in safer conditions, received medical care, had access to education, and possessed legal rights and social respect denied to commoners. The hierarchies were internalized as natural—subjects prostrated before superiors, accepted corporal punishment, and acknowledged their subordination as divinely ordained.

This system persisted because the three monopolies prevented effective resistance. Peasants couldn't organize across villages due to state violence and millet divisions. Urban workers were fragmented by guild structures and religious identities. Slaves had no independent existence. Non-Muslims competed for Ottoman favor rather than cooperating with Muslim subjects. The ulema taught acceptance rather than resistance. And any organized challenge faced overwhelming military force.

The Pattern for Future Transformations

The Ottoman system by 1650 establishes patterns we can track through subsequent periods. First, elite power derived from control of wealth-producing assets (land primarily, but also tax farming rights, urban property, and commercial monopolies). Second, this control was enforced through state violence monopoly capable of crushing resistance. Third, ideological frameworks (religious authority, imperial magnificence, millet system) legitimized extraction and prevented questioning of fundamental hierarchies.

Fourth, elite fractions coordinated through state institutions (Divan, ulema hierarchy, military command structure) while also competing for resources and positions. Fifth, extraction was regressive—falling heaviest on those least able to bear it—and non-redistributive—concentrated in elite hands rather than providing public goods. Sixth, the system discouraged productive investment through property insecurity, encouraging elite consumption and wealth hiding rather than development.

The question for subsequent periods becomes: When the Ottoman system faces crises (military defeats, economic problems, nationalist movements, European penetration, eventual collapse), do these patterns persist, transform, or break? Do new elites replace old ones while maintaining the same structures, or do fundamental transformations occur? Do the mechanisms of extraction change form while serving the same function, or does the Republic genuinely break elite power?

To answer these questions requires tracking the system through its 17th-18th century decline, 19th century reform attempts, World War I collapse, and Republican transformation. But the baseline is now established—by 1650, the Ottoman Empire had created a sophisticated system concentrating wealth and power in elite hands while preventing challenges through violence, ideology, and institutional control.

Coverage:

- Legal and Institutional Frameworks: Şeriat and kanun duality, capitulations, military organization as legalized violence
- Wealth Extraction Mechanisms: Revenue sources quantified, tributary system, military booty, capital flight and elite wealth preservation
- Narrative Construction: Jihad ideology, millet system as divide-and-rule, imperial magnificence
- Assessment: Elite structure consolidated (1299-1650), three monopolies established, material outcomes documented, pattern established for tracking through future transformations

Next Section (Part 1 Section 3) Will Cover:

- Decline and Crisis (1650-1800): Territorial losses, economic deterioration, ayan power increase
- Reform Attempts (1800-1876): Tanzimat, military modernization, legal reforms, European penetration
- Resistance and Suppression: Janissary destruction (1826), peasant revolts, nationalist movements emerging
- Assessment leading into Part 2 (1876-1923): Young Turks, World War I, genocide, empire's collapse

TURKEY CASE STUDY - PART 1 SECTION 3

From Ottoman Empire to Turkish Republic (1299-2025)

Decline, Reform, and Adaptation (1650-1876)

PROLOGUE: A PROVINCIAL NOTABLE'S LEDGER

Manisa, Western Anatolia, 1780

The ledger sat on the carved wooden desk, its pages filled with careful notations in Ottoman Turkish. Osman Ağa, head of the Karaosmanoğlu family and hereditary governor of the Manisa region, reviewed the accounts with his scribe. The entries revealed the scope of his domain:

Revenue from tax farming contracts in seventeen districts: 2.3 million akçe. Revenue from family çiftlik estates worked by sharecropping peasants: 1.8 million akçe. Customs duties from the port at Izmir (shared with the central government, though Osman kept more than officially stipulated): 600,000 akçe. "Gifts" from merchants seeking licenses and protection: 400,000 akçe. Loans to smaller ayan and officials at 15-20 percent interest: income variable but substantial.

Total annual revenue: approximately 5 million akçe, rivaling many provincial treasuries and exceeding what most grand viziers could extract even in their prime.

Expenses told the story of power. The private army—800 cavalry and 1,200 infantry armed with modern muskets purchased from European suppliers—cost 2 million akçe annually. The family mansion in Manisa, estates scattered across the region, and the townhouse in Constantinople required another 500,000 akçe for maintenance and servants. Bribes to officials in Constantinople to maintain the family's governorship and tax farming contracts: 400,000 akçe, paid annually to ensure the Sultan's firmans continued recognizing Karaosmanoğlu authority. Gifts to ulema, support for madrasas and mosques, patronage of poets and artists: 300,000 akçe, buying legitimacy and respect.

The remaining 1.8 million akçe represented pure profit, accumulating in the family treasury as gold, invested in urban properties in Constantinople and Izmir, and used to purchase additional tax farming rights.

Osman Ağa's grandfather had been a successful tax farmer who converted his wealth into local power. His father had established the family as hereditary governors, recognized by

Constantinople because the central government lacked the capacity to administer the region directly. Osman himself had expanded the family's holdings through careful cultivation of relationships in Constantinople, ruthless suppression of local rivals, and strategic marriages allying the Karaosmanoğlu with other powerful ayan families.

He paid nominal tribute to Constantinople—perhaps 800,000 akçe annually, less than what he should have paid based on the region's actual wealth. But the Sultan's treasury was desperate for any revenue it could get, and attempting to replace Osman would require military force the central government couldn't afford. So the relationship continued: Osman ruled his region effectively as a feudal lord, Constantinople received a fraction of what it theoretically deserved, and the pretense of centralized Ottoman governance was maintained.

When the scribe asked about an entry labeled "suppression of unrest in the northern villages," Osman waved dismissively. "Three villages refused to pay the full levy. We burned two, executed the headmen, and the third paid double. The cost was minimal—two days' provisions for a company of cavalry."

This was how the Ottoman Empire actually functioned in 1780. Not through the grand viziers and sultanic decrees chroniclers described, but through provincial dynasties like the Karaosmanoğlu who had accumulated local power that the weakened central state couldn't challenge. The empire hadn't collapsed, but it had transformed into something closer to feudalism than the centralized administration of Süleyman's era.

Osman closed the ledger and looked toward Constantinople, where a weak sultan and factional politics consumed the government's attention. Let them fight over ceremonies and titles, he thought. Real power was here, in the provinces, where land and armed men determined who ruled. The empire's future, if it had one, would be determined not by sultans in palaces but by ayan families like his who controlled the territories and extracted the wealth.

He was both right and wrong. The ayan would indeed shape the empire's trajectory through the next century of crises. But forces beyond their control—European military superiority, nationalist ideologies, economic transformations—would ultimately destroy the system entirely, taking the ayan and the empire with it.

IX. THE LONG DECLINE: CRISIS AND FRAGMENTATION (1650-1800)

Territorial Losses and Military Defeat

The Ottoman Empire reached its maximum territorial extent in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, controlling territories from Algeria to Iraq, from Hungary to Yemen. The failed siege of

Vienna in 1683 marked not just a military defeat but the beginning of a long territorial retreat that would continue for over two centuries until the empire's final collapse in 1923.

The siege of Vienna, led by Grand Vizier Kara Mustafa Pasha with an army of perhaps 150,000-200,000, represented the Ottoman Empire's last major offensive thrust into Christian Europe. The siege began in July 1683 and lasted two months before a relief force led by Polish King Jan Sobieski defeated the Ottoman army on September 12, 1683. The defeat was catastrophic—Ottoman forces retreated in disorder, losing artillery, supplies, and perhaps 20,000-30,000 dead. Kara Mustafa was executed by the Sultan for the failure, but the execution couldn't reverse the strategic reality: the Ottomans could no longer successfully attack into the heart of Europe.

The Holy League War (1684-1699) that followed demonstrated the changed power balance. Austria, Poland, Venice, and Russia formed a coalition that drove Ottoman forces from Hungary, Transylvania, the Morea (southern Greece), and parts of Ukraine. The Treaty of Karlowitz (1699) forced the empire to cede Hungary, Transylvania, and most of Croatia to Austria, Podolia to Poland, and the Morea to Venice. This represented the first major territorial losses in Ottoman history—previous treaties had involved temporary setbacks, but Karlowitz permanently surrendered territories that had been Ottoman for over a century.

The pattern would repeat throughout the 18th century. The war with Russia and Austria (1735-1739) recovered some territory but exhausted the treasury. The war with Russia (1768-1774) ended with the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca, granting Russia the right to protect Orthodox Christians in Ottoman territories (a clause Russia would use to justify intervention in Ottoman affairs), allowing Russian ships to navigate the Black Sea and Mediterranean, and ceding the Crimean Khanate's independence (Russia would annex it in 1783). The wars with Russia in 1787-1792 and 1806-1812 brought further losses.

These defeats had profound economic and political consequences. Each war cost millions in treasure—armies had to be equipped, mercenaries hired, fortifications built. The loss of productive territories reduced the tax base—Hungary's agricultural wealth, Crimean Tatar slave raids, and Balkan mines all generated revenue that now went to Austria or Russia. The psychological impact was severe—the empire that had terrified Europe for centuries was now being pushed back by Christian powers, undermining Ottoman military prestige and Islamic imperial ideology.

The military defeats also revealed technological and organizational gaps. European armies were adopting new tactics—linear formations using massed musket fire, mobile artillery, systematic drill and discipline. The Ottomans retained older methods—cavalry charges, individual combat prowess, siege warfare focused on fortifications. When Janissaries with muskets faced Austrian infantry in disciplined lines with coordinated volleys, the Ottomans suffered heavy casualties. When Ottoman artillery faced European mobile field guns, the Ottomans couldn't match the rate of fire or accuracy.

Attempts to modernize the military faced resistance from the Janissaries themselves. Any reform threatening their privileges triggered revolts. The Janissaries had become a hereditary interest group defending their positions rather than an effective military force. They blocked attempts to create new infantry units trained in European methods, assassinated reformist officers, and overthrew sultans who pushed too hard for change. This conservative resistance prevented military adaptation even as defeats demonstrated its necessity.

By 1800, the Ottoman Empire had lost perhaps one-third of its territorial extent from its maximum. More importantly, it had lost the military initiative. Wars were now defensive, attempting to hold territory rather than conquer new lands. The psychological transformation from expansionist empire to defensive state struggling to survive changed elite calculations and legitimacy frameworks. If the empire wasn't expanding and enriching elites through conquest, what justified the system's extraction and violence?

Economic Deterioration and Fiscal Crisis

Military defeats both caused and resulted from deepening economic crisis. The empire's fiscal problems in the 17th and 18th centuries created a vicious cycle: economic weakness prevented military modernization, military defeats reduced revenue, reduced revenue intensified economic crisis.

The fundamental problem was that expenditures grew while revenues stagnated or declined. Military costs increased—wars were more frequent, lasted longer, and required more expensive technology. European advisors, weapons, and fortifications all cost more than traditional Ottoman military methods. The bureaucracy grew in size and corruption, consuming more revenue. And the palace expenses, court ceremonies, and elite consumption continued at lavish levels despite economic problems.

But revenues couldn't keep pace. The timar system had largely collapsed—timars were sold, converted to tax farms, or held by officials who never performed military service. This reduced military capacity while also disrupting the revenue system timars had supported. The peasant tax base was shrinking—peasants fled to cities or to frontiers to escape taxation, reducing agricultural production. Rebellions and banditry disrupted economic activity. And territorial losses meant entire revenue sources disappeared.

Tax farming, which became the dominant revenue collection method, worsened the fiscal crisis even as it enriched tax farmers. The state auctioned tax collection rights for upfront payments, providing immediate revenue but sacrificing future income. Tax farmers extracted as much as possible during their tenure, driving peasants to desperation and flight. The malikane system (lifetime tax farms) made the problem worse—once a tax farm was granted for life, the state received no further revenue from it, but the tax farmer continued extracting from peasants.

Inflation compounded these problems. The influx of American silver in the 16th and 17th centuries caused price increases throughout the empire. Wages stagnated while prices rose, reducing purchasing power and living standards. The state debased coinage to pay expenses,

causing further inflation and destroying confidence in Ottoman currency. By the 18th century, European gold and silver coins circulated more widely than Ottoman akçe in many regions.

The state resorted to increasingly desperate fiscal expedients. The practice of müsadere (confiscation) intensified—wealthy officials and merchants were accused of corruption or disloyalty, their property seized by the treasury. This provided temporary revenue but discouraged capital accumulation and productive investment. Why build a business or accumulate wealth if the state might confiscate it at any moment?

Sale of offices became systematic. Government positions were auctioned to the highest bidder, with the winning bidder expected to extract enough from the position to recover the purchase price plus profit. This encouraged corruption at every level—purchased positions had to pay for themselves through bribes, fees, and extortion. The practice also meant that competence became secondary to wealth in official appointments.

Borrowing from European banks and merchants increased. The state took loans at high interest rates, pledging future revenues as collateral. This created debt dependency that would intensify in the 19th century. European creditors gained influence over Ottoman fiscal policy, demanding reforms as conditions for loans and threatening intervention if payments were missed.

By the late 18th century, the Ottoman state was functionally bankrupt. Revenue barely covered basic administrative costs and could not fund major military campaigns without borrowing. The fiscal crisis meant the state couldn't suppress provincial autonomy, couldn't modernize the military, couldn't maintain infrastructure, and couldn't provide even minimal public services. This weakness enabled the ayan's rise and European penetration while undermining state legitimacy.

The Rise of Provincial Ayan

The weakening of central authority and the transformation of tax farming into lifetime grants (malikane) created opportunities for ambitious provincial elites to accumulate power. By the mid-18th century, powerful ayan families controlled entire regions, functioning effectively as autonomous rulers while maintaining nominal Ottoman sovereignty.

The ayan emerged from diverse backgrounds. Some were descendants of old timar-holding families who converted their cavalry service obligations into tax farming contracts. Others were successful merchants who purchased tax farms and used them to accumulate land. Still others were religious scholars (ulema) whose families parlayed religious authority into political and economic power. What they shared was local knowledge, connections, and ruthlessness necessary to dominate provincial politics.

The mechanism of ayan power accumulation followed patterns. An ambitious individual would bid for tax farming rights in a region, possibly borrowing money to finance the bid. Once awarded the tax farm, he would extract maximum revenue from peasants, using part to pay the state and keeping the rest. With accumulated capital, he would bid for additional tax farms, larger territories, and eventually secure malikane (lifetime grants). He would use revenue to

recruit armed retainers—cavalry for control of countryside, infantry for garrison duties. With armed force, he could suppress rivals, intimidate officials, and negotiate better terms with Constantinople.

The most successful ayan established hereditary control. They married their children to other ayan families, creating networks spanning regions. They cultivated relationships with central officials through bribes and gifts. They positioned themselves as indispensable—the central government couldn't collect revenue or maintain order without them, so they had to be accommodated. And they invested in legitimacy, patronizing mosques, madrasas, and charitable works that earned ulema support and popular respect.

By the late 18th century, several ayan families had achieved quasi-feudal power. The Karaosmanoğlu in western Anatolia controlled Manisa and surrounding territories for over a century. The Çapanoğlu in central Anatolia ruled from Yozgat with private armies numbering thousands. The Azm family in Damascus governed Syria effectively as a dynasty. Tepedelenli Ali Pasha of Ioannina controlled much of Albania and Epirus, maintaining an army of 30,000 and running an independent foreign policy.

These ayan were not rebels seeking independence—they accepted Ottoman sovereignty and paid tribute to Constantinople. But their tribute was negotiated, not dictated. They maintained private armies that rivaled the Sultan's forces. They administered justice, collected taxes, and governed territories with minimal central interference. Constantinople appointed them as governors, but the appointments merely recognized existing power rather than creating it.

The ayan system had several characteristics crucial for understanding elite continuity. First, ayan power derived from control of productive assets (land, tax farms) and armed force, not from state appointment. This made them more resilient than the devşirme elite whose power depended entirely on sultanic favor. Second, ayan wealth was accumulated and invested locally rather than concentrated in Constantinople, creating provincial power centers independent of the capital. Third, ayan families established hereditary control, passing power across generations through family networks.

The relationship between ayan and central state was symbiotic but tense. Constantinople needed ayan to collect revenue, maintain order, and provide military forces during campaigns. The ayan needed Constantinople's formal recognition to legitimize their rule. But each sought to maximize its share of extracted resources, creating constant negotiation and occasional conflict.

Some sultans attempted to curb ayan power. Selim III (1789-1807) tried to create new military forces (Nizam-ı Cedid, "New Order") that would reduce dependence on Janissaries and ayan levies. This threatened both Janissary privileges and ayan autonomy, leading to a coalition that deposed Selim in 1807. His successor Mustafa IV was overthrown in 1808, and Mahmud II became sultan facing the daunting task of somehow reasserting central authority against entrenched provincial power.

The ayan represented a transformation of Ottoman elite structure. The centralized slave-elite system of the classical period had given way to a decentralized system of provincial notables whose power was rooted in local control of land and armed force. This would have profound consequences when the empire collapsed and the Republic emerged. The ayan class, unlike the devşirme elite, had resources that could be converted to power under a new regime. Many ayan families would successfully transition to become major landowners and politicians in the Turkish Republic, demonstrating elite adaptation across regime transformation.

X. REFORM ATTEMPTS AND THEIR LIMITS (1800-1876)

The Destruction of the Janissaries (1826)

Sultan Mahmud II, ruling from 1808 to 1839, recognized that any meaningful reform required breaking the Janissaries' power. For two centuries they had blocked military modernization, overthrown reformist sultans, and extracted increasing privileges while declining in effectiveness. But destroying an institution with 50,000-100,000 members who were armed, organized, and entrenched in the capital required careful planning and ruthless execution.

Mahmud spent years preparing. He cultivated loyal forces—palace guards, artillery units, and specially recruited troops trained separately from the Janissaries. He secured support from ulema and from some ayan who recognized that the empire's military weakness threatened their own positions. He ensured financial resources to pay loyal forces. And he waited for an opportunity.

The opportunity came in June 1826 when Mahmud announced the formation of a new military force (Asakir-i Mansure-i Muhammediye, "The Victorious Soldiers of Muhammad") to be trained in European methods. The Janissaries, recognizing this as a threat, revolted on June 14, 1826, overturning their soup kettles (the traditional signal for revolt) and marching on the palace.

Mahmud was prepared. He had the Sultan's banner (Sancak-ı Şerif) unfurled and declared holy war against the Janissaries, framing them as rebels against Islam rather than defenders of tradition. Artillery units bombarded the Janissary barracks with grapeshot. Loyal troops and armed civilians attacked Janissaries throughout the city. The fighting lasted only hours—Janissaries who didn't flee were killed or captured.

The slaughter was systematic. Perhaps 10,000-20,000 Janissaries died in the initial violence. Thousands more were executed in the following weeks. The Janissary corps was abolished entirely, its property confiscated, its members purged from military and government positions. Even the name "Janissary" became forbidden. The institution that had defined Ottoman military power for over four centuries was destroyed in a single day.

The event became known as the "Auspicious Incident" (Vaka-i Hayriye), framed as a fortunate occurrence that removed an obstacle to reform. But it was more accurately a military coup by the Sultan against his own elite troops, demonstrating that fundamental reform required revolutionary violence even when initiated from above.

The Janissaries' destruction had profound consequences. It removed the primary obstacle to military modernization, enabling the creation of new forces trained in European methods. It demonstrated that even deeply entrenched institutions could be destroyed when the Sultan was willing to use overwhelming force. It shifted the balance of power toward the Sultan and reformist officials and away from conservative military elites.

But it also created new problems. The new army, trained by European advisors and equipped with European weapons, was initially smaller and less experienced than the Janissary corps had been. The empire was vulnerable during the transition. Greece achieved independence (1830) partly because the Ottoman military was in disarray during the reconstruction. And the new military forces, once established, would become their own interest group defending their privileges—the problem the Janissaries represented wasn't eliminated, just transferred to a new institution.

For our framework analysis, the Janissaries' destruction demonstrates both elite adaptation and limits on transformation. The military elite was violently destroyed, but a new military elite immediately emerged to replace it. The institution changed, but the violence monopoly persisted in state hands. The specific individuals wielding military power changed, but the relationship between military force and political authority remained fundamentally similar—whoever controlled organized violence could dominate the state.

The Tanzimat Reforms (1839-1876)

The Tanzimat ("Reorganization") period represented the Ottoman Empire's most serious attempt at systemic reform. Initiated by the Gülhane Decree (Hatt-ı Şerif of Gülhane) issued in November 1839 during the reign of Sultan Abdülmecid I, the Tanzimat sought to modernize Ottoman institutions, centralize administration, and create legal equality for all subjects regardless of religion.

The Gülhane Decree promised several transformative changes. First, it guaranteed security of life, honor, and property for all Ottoman subjects—meaning officials couldn't arbitrarily confiscate property or execute people without trial. Second, it promised regular taxation assessed fairly rather than arbitrary levies. Third, it promised military conscription applying equally to Muslims and non-Muslims (though in practice, non-Muslims paid an exemption tax). Fourth, it promised equal treatment under law regardless of religion, directly challenging the millet system's hierarchical structure.

The Reform Edict (Hatt-ı Hümayun) of 1856, issued under European pressure following the Crimean War, extended these promises. It explicitly granted non-Muslims equal rights in education, employment, and justice. It allowed non-Muslims to serve in government, testify in

court on equal terms with Muslims, and build churches without restrictions. It abolished the jizya, the poll tax that had marked non-Muslim subordination for centuries.

These legal reforms were accompanied by institutional changes. New secular law codes were drafted based on French models—the Commercial Code (1850), Penal Code (1858), Land Code (1858), and eventually the comprehensive Mecelle (Civil Code, 1869-1876) which attempted to codify Islamic law while incorporating European legal concepts. Secular courts (nizamiye courts) were established alongside sharia courts, creating a dual legal system. The Ministry of Education was created (1857) to establish secular schools teaching science, mathematics, and European languages alongside traditional madrasas.

Administrative reforms sought to centralize control. The empire was reorganized into provinces (vilayets) with standardized administrative structures. Governors were appointed by Constantinople and rotated regularly to prevent them becoming ayan-style autonomous rulers. Telegraph lines connected provinces to the capital, enabling faster communication and oversight. Modern census-taking began, though it was incomplete and resisted in many regions.

But the Tanzimat's transformative rhetoric exceeded its actual implementation. Several factors limited its effectiveness. First, the reforms threatened entrenched interests—ulema resisted secular education and legal codes, ayan resisted centralization that reduced their autonomy, Muslim officials resisted equality for non-Muslims, and military officers resisted civilian oversight. Each group had means to sabotage reforms they opposed.

Second, the state lacked capacity to implement reforms consistently across the empire. In Constantinople and major cities, nizamiye courts and secular schools functioned. In remote provinces, old patterns persisted—kadis applying sharia, ayan collecting taxes as they pleased, peasants unaware that laws had supposedly changed. The gap between legal text and lived reality was enormous.

Third, the reforms created new problems while attempting to solve old ones. Granting non-Muslims formal equality antagonized Muslim populations who saw their superior status threatened. This contributed to intercommunal violence—the Damascus riots of 1860 where Muslims massacred thousands of Christians, the Bulgarian uprisings and their brutal suppression in the 1870s. Equality on paper didn't create equality in practice but did destabilize the millet system's established hierarchies.

Fourth, the Tanzimat was implemented under European pressure and oversight, making it appear as capitulation to foreign powers rather than indigenous reform. European creditors and diplomats used the reforms as leverage, demanding specific changes as conditions for loans or treaties. This undermined the reforms' legitimacy domestically—they seemed like foreign impositions rather than Ottoman initiatives.

Fifth, the reforms didn't challenge fundamental power structures. Property rights were formalized, but land ownership concentration wasn't addressed. Taxation was supposedly regularized, but tax farming persisted under new names. Equality was proclaimed, but Muslims

retained advantages in practice. The sultan remained autocrat with theoretical absolute power. The reforms modernized extraction mechanisms but didn't democratize power or redistribute wealth.

The Land Code of 1858 particularly demonstrated reform's limits and unintended consequences. It aimed to clarify property rights, enable land registration, and facilitate tax collection. But in practice, it enabled large landowners to register communal lands in their own names, converting customary usage rights into private ownership. In Syria, Iraq, and other regions, tribal chiefs and urban notables used the Land Code to appropriate peasant lands, creating a landlord class where none had existed before. The peasants who had cultivated land for generations suddenly became tenants or sharecroppers, worsening their conditions in the name of "reform."

By 1876, when Sultan Abdülaziz was deposed and the brief First Constitutional Period began, the Tanzimat had achieved mixed results. It had created some modern institutions—secular schools, law codes, administrative structures. It had weakened (though not eliminated) ulema power by creating secular alternatives to religious courts and education. It had nominally granted equality to non-Muslims (though actual discrimination persisted). It had attempted centralization, reducing ayan autonomy somewhat.

But it had not fundamentally transformed elite power. The same families who controlled land and tax farms before Tanzimat controlled them afterward, often with stronger legal title. The same military force maintained order through violence. The same bureaucratic elite extracted resources from peasants, just through modernized administrative structures. The same hierarchies placing wealthy over poor, officials over subjects, Muslims over non-Muslims persisted beneath the veneer of legal equality.

For our framework, the Tanzimat demonstrates how reforms can modernize extraction mechanisms without transforming underlying power relationships. New legal codes, secular courts, modern administration—all these served elite interests by making the system more efficient and legally rationalized while preserving wealth concentration and violence monopoly. The specific institutions changed, but the functions persisted: extraction, domination, legitimization.

European Economic Penetration

While the Tanzimat reformed Ottoman institutions, European economic penetration fundamentally altered the empire's position in the global economy, transforming it from a semi-autonomous imperial power into a semi-colonial periphery.

The capitulations, discussed earlier, became increasingly unequal in the 19th century. European powers interpreted them expansively, claiming privileges beyond the original agreements. The number of Ottoman subjects claiming foreign protection exploded—by mid-century, hundreds of thousands held protégé status, exempting them from Ottoman taxation and jurisdiction.

European merchants dominated Ottoman commerce, using their tariff advantages to undercut Ottoman producers.

European manufactured goods flooded Ottoman markets, destroying local industries. Textiles from Manchester, metalwork from Birmingham, glass from Bohemia—all entered at low tariff rates while Ottoman artisans faced higher taxes and guild restrictions. The empire's balance of trade shifted dramatically negative. In 1820, Ottoman exports roughly equaled imports. By 1870, imports exceeded exports by substantial margins, the gap filled by borrowing and capital transfers.

Foreign investment and infrastructure projects created new forms of dependency. European companies built railroads, ports, and telegraph lines under concessions granting them monopoly rights and guaranteed minimum returns. The Ottoman state often guaranteed these returns, meaning that if traffic or usage didn't generate sufficient revenue, the treasury made up the difference. This transferred risk from investors to the state while enabling European capital to profit regardless of projects' actual success.

The most significant railroad concessions went to European companies. The Baghdad Railway, a German project, received concessions in the 1900s granting mineral rights along the route, tax exemptions, and guaranteed returns. The Anatolian Railway, another German concession, operated on similar terms. British and French companies controlled other lines. These railroads facilitated resource extraction—timber, minerals, agricultural products—flowing from Anatolia to European markets while European manufactured goods flowed in.

European banks established branches in Ottoman cities, controlling finance and credit. The Ottoman Bank, founded in 1856 with British and French capital, became the empire's central bank with monopoly on note issuance. European creditors increasingly controlled Ottoman fiscal policy through their influence over this institution. When the empire needed loans, European banks provided them at high interest rates with Ottoman tax revenues pledged as collateral.

The debt crisis came to a head in 1875 when the Ottoman government declared partial default, unable to meet interest payments on debts totaling perhaps £200 million (roughly 10-15 times annual revenue). European creditors forced the creation of the Ottoman Public Debt Administration (OPDA) in 1881, giving European representatives direct control over Ottoman finances. The OPDA collected specific taxes—salt and tobacco monopolies, stamp duties, various fees—using them to service the foreign debt before remaining funds went to the Ottoman treasury.

This arrangement represented semi-colonialism without formal colonial status. European powers controlled Ottoman finances, dominated commerce, built infrastructure on exploitative terms, and influenced policy through debt leverage and diplomatic pressure. The Ottoman state retained formal sovereignty, but effective economic control had passed to European capital.

For Ottoman subjects, European penetration had mixed effects. Some benefited—Christian and Jewish merchants who partnered with European firms, landowners who sold cash crops to

European markets, urban consumers who accessed cheaper manufactured goods. But most suffered—artisans destroyed by European competition, peasants increasingly indebted to moneylenders and merchants, workers facing wage pressure from imported goods.

The transformation of the Ottoman economy's structure was profound. From a relatively autonomous empire that produced most of what it consumed and extracted tribute from peripheries, it became a peripheral economy exporting raw materials (silk, tobacco, cotton, minerals) and importing manufactured goods (textiles, metal products, machinery). This classic core-periphery relationship created dependency that persisted even after the empire's collapse.

For our framework, European economic penetration demonstrates how extraction mechanisms can transcend political sovereignty. Even without formal colonization, European capital extracted wealth from Ottoman territories through trade, finance, and infrastructure concessions. A comprador class—Ottoman subjects who facilitated European penetration and profited from it—emerged, demonstrating how local elites adapt to new extraction systems by becoming intermediaries.

When the Republic emerged, the question would be whether this economic subordination persisted or whether Turkey could establish genuine economic independence. The answer, as we'll see, involves continued dependency through different mechanisms—foreign capital investment, technology imports, debt relationships—even as formal political sovereignty was reasserted.

XI. RESISTANCE AND SUPPRESSION: MAINTAINING ORDER THROUGH VIOLENCE

Peasant Revolts and Bandits

The Ottoman Empire faced continuous internal resistance throughout its history, but the 19th century saw an intensification of peasant rebellions, brigandage, and intercommunal violence as the state's fiscal extraction increased while its capacity to maintain order declined.

Peasant revolts typically followed similar patterns. Excessive taxation, arbitrary levies, or abusive officials would drive peasants to desperation. They would appeal to higher authorities for relief, appeals that were usually ignored. Eventually, they would refuse to pay taxes, sometimes killing tax collectors or local officials. The state would send military forces to suppress the revolt. Villages would be burned, leaders executed, and surviving peasants forced to pay arrears plus punitive fees.

The Vidin Rebellion (1850) in Bulgaria exemplified this pattern. Muslim and Christian peasants, united in opposition to oppressive tax farming, refused to pay levies and killed several officials. The rebellion spread across the region before Ottoman forces crushed it, executing hundreds

and burning villages. What's notable is that Muslim and Christian peasants cooperated against the state—the millet system's religious divisions could be overcome when shared economic grievances were acute enough.

Brigandage (eşkıya) was endemic throughout Anatolia and the Balkans. Dispossessed peasants, deserting soldiers, and outlaws took to the mountains, raiding travelers, villages, and caravans. Some bandits were simple criminals, but many were proto-political rebels who attacked state officials, wealthy landlords, and symbols of authority. In some regions, bandits enjoyed popular support as social bandits who redistributed wealth (though this romanticization often exceeded reality).

The state responded to brigandage with military expeditions, collective punishment of villages suspected of harboring bandits, and attempts to co-opt bandit leaders by offering amnesty and positions in local militias. But brigandage persisted because the underlying causes—poverty, oppression, economic desperation—were never addressed. Suppressing one bandit group simply led to another emerging.

The suppression methods were brutal and systematic. Ottoman counter-insurgency doctrine held that rebellion had to be crushed overwhelmingly to deter future uprisings. Villages were burned to deny rebels shelter. Families of rebels were punished to discourage support. Public executions of captured rebels served as warnings. Collective fines were imposed on entire regions where uprisings occurred.

The effectiveness of these suppression methods in maintaining Ottoman control for centuries demonstrates the importance of the violence monopoly. Peasants, however desperate, couldn't sustain resistance against organized military force. Bandits could raid and flee but couldn't hold territory or defeat regular troops in open combat. Without weapons, organization, or outside support, internal resistance remained limited to local revolts that were individually suppressed even if collectively they indicated systemic problems.

Nationalist Movements and Their Suppression

The 19th century saw the emergence of nationalist movements among the Ottoman Empire's Christian populations—Greeks, Serbs, Bulgarians, Romanians, Armenians. These movements combined ethnic identity, religious affiliation, and political ideology (nationalism derived from European Enlightenment and Romantic thought) in ways that fundamentally challenged Ottoman multi-ethnic imperial structure.

The Greek Revolution (1821-1830) demonstrated both nationalism's power and the violence required to suppress it. Greek nationalists, inspired by European liberal ideas and supported by merchants and intellectuals, rose in revolt across the Morea and the Aegean islands. The Ottoman response was ferocious—massacres of Greek populations on Chios, destruction of villages, mass enslavements. The Greeks responded with massacres of Muslims. The conflict became a brutal ethnic war with atrocities on both sides.

The revolution succeeded only because of European intervention. British, French, and Russian naval forces destroyed the Ottoman-Egyptian fleet at Navarino (1827), preventing Ottoman forces from crushing the revolt. European pressure forced the empire to recognize Greek independence in 1830. The lesson was clear: nationalist rebellions could succeed only with external support; the Ottoman state's violence capacity was sufficient to crush internal revolts but not to resist European military intervention.

The Tanzimat reforms' promise of equality actually intensified nationalist movements. If Ottomanism (a supra-ethnic Ottoman identity) was possible, it might have reduced separatist impulses. But the gap between promised equality and actual discrimination, combined with the stirring of national consciousness, made Christians increasingly unwilling to accept subordinate status even in reformed form. They wanted independence, not equal Ottoman citizenship.

Bulgarian uprisings in the 1870s followed similar patterns to the Greek revolution. Rebels attacked Ottoman officials and Muslims, Ottoman forces responded with massacres that killed perhaps 15,000-30,000 Bulgarians, European powers pressured the empire to grant autonomy, and Bulgaria eventually achieved independence (1878). The cycle of rebellion, suppression through atrocity, and European intervention repeated.

The Armenian case was more complex and more tragic. Unlike Balkan Christians who had compact territories where they formed majorities, Armenians were distributed across eastern Anatolia intermingled with Muslim populations (Kurds, Turks, Circassians). Nationalist Armenian organizations emerged in the late 19th century, some advocating autonomy, others independence, a few using terrorism (assassinations, bombings) to draw attention to their cause.

Sultan Abdülhamid II's response to Armenian nationalism was systematic repression. The Hamidian massacres (1894-1896) killed perhaps 80,000-300,000 Armenians (estimates vary widely) in eastern Anatolia and other regions. Kurdish irregular cavalry (the Hamidiye regiments, created by the Sultan and modeled on Cossacks) conducted many of the killings, demonstrating the state's use of ethnic militias for suppression. The massacres' message was clear: nationalist organization would be met with overwhelming violence against entire communities, not just identified rebels.

European powers protested but took no military action comparable to their Balkan interventions. Armenians lacked the external support that Greeks and Bulgarians had enjoyed. The Ottoman state learned that if atrocities occurred in regions Europeans cared less about, or against groups with less European support, they could suppress nationalist movements with minimal international consequences. This lesson would inform the genocide of 1915-1917.

For our framework, nationalist movements and their suppression demonstrate the limits and necessities of the violence monopoly. The Ottoman state could suppress internal revolts through extreme violence, but it couldn't suppress revolts that received European military support. Nationalism created a new form of resistance that the millet system couldn't contain—it transcended religious identity to create political movements demanding self-determination. The

empire's response was intensified violence, which sometimes succeeded (Armenians) and sometimes failed (Greeks, Bulgarians) depending on international support.

Labor Resistance and Its Limits

While peasant revolts and nationalist movements receive more historical attention, urban labor resistance also emerged in the late Ottoman period, though it remained limited in scope and effectiveness.

The Ottoman Empire industrialized slowly and partially in the 19th century. Textile mills, tobacco processing, port facilities, railroads, and some mining employed wage workers in concentrations large enough to enable organizing. But industrialization lagged far behind Europe—in 1900, perhaps 10-15 percent of the Ottoman population was urbanized, and only a fraction of urban residents were industrial workers.

Early labor resistance took informal forms—slowdowns, sabotage, individual acts of defiance. But by the late 19th century, strikes began occurring in ports, railroads, and factories. Tobacco workers in Izmir, dockers in Constantinople, railroad workers on European-built lines—all conducted strikes demanding better pay, shorter hours, or improved conditions.

The state's response varied. Sometimes it negotiated, particularly when strikes threatened European-owned enterprises whose companies pressured Ottoman authorities to restore order. Sometimes it arrested strike leaders and broke strikes with military force. Sometimes it simply ignored strikes in the knowledge that workers' desperation would force them back to work without concessions.

Labor organizing faced severe obstacles. Workers were ethnically and religiously divided—the millet system's communalism prevented class solidarity. Greek, Armenian, Jewish, and Muslim workers often competed rather than cooperated, particularly when employers deliberately fostered divisions. Legal frameworks prohibited strikes and labor organizing, making any collective action illegal and subject to prosecution. And the state's violence capacity meant that any labor action faced potential military suppression.

Some labor organizing occurred through mutual aid societies and benevolent associations, which were technically legal if they avoided explicit political activity. These provided minimal benefits—funeral expenses, sickness support—while creating networks that could be mobilized for labor actions. But they remained small and fragmented.

Socialist and anarchist ideas circulated in urban areas, brought by European radicals, returning Ottoman students who studied in Europe, and through underground publications. The Young Turks, initially a broad coalition seeking constitutional government, included some members with socialist sympathies. But socialism remained marginal in an empire where industrial workers were a tiny minority and peasants (the vast majority) were fragmented by geography, ethnicity, and religion.

For our framework, labor resistance's weakness in the late Ottoman period demonstrates how elite power is reinforced by particular economic structures. In societies where the majority are peasants or artisans rather than industrial workers, and where those workers are divided by ethnic and religious identities, class consciousness and effective labor organizing face enormous obstacles. The violence monopoly suppresses resistance, but economic structure and identity fragmentation prevent resistance from achieving scale or effectiveness in the first place.

XII. ASSESSMENT: WHAT CHANGED AND WHAT PERSISTED (1650-1876)

Elite Transformation: From Devşirme to Ayan to Bureaucrats

The Ottoman elite structure underwent significant transformation between 1650 and 1876, yet fundamental patterns persisted. Tracking these changes reveals both adaptation and continuity.

The devşirme-educated slave elite that dominated the 16th and early 17th centuries had largely disappeared by the 18th century. The devşirme system itself declined and eventually ended, though the exact termination date is debated—levies became infrequent in the late 17th century and stopped entirely by the early 18th. The Janissaries became hereditary, filled by free-born Muslims rather than slave-converts. High positions that were once exclusively held by kul (slaves) were increasingly held by free-born Ottoman subjects.

This represented a genuine transformation of elite recruitment. The system that had created an elite entirely dependent on the Sultan, lacking family ties or independent resources, was replaced by a more conventional elite based on family connections, inheritance, and local power. But did this transformation weaken elite power or simply redistribute it among different elite fractions?

The ayan class, as discussed earlier, accumulated enormous power in the 18th and early 19th centuries. They represented a genuinely new elite fraction—not descended from the old timar-holding cavalry, not products of the devşirme system, but self-made men who used tax farming, trade, and local military power to establish provincial dynasties. They controlled land, armed forces, and local administration. They inherited wealth and power across generations. And they resisted central control, functioning as quasi-feudal lords.

But the ayan's power was not unlimited or unchallenged. Mahmud II's reforms in the 1820s-1830s and the Tanzimat's centralization efforts reduced ayan autonomy. The state rotated governors more frequently, preventing them from establishing local roots. Telegraph communications enabled central oversight. Modern military forces (post-Janissary) were loyal to Constantinople rather than local notables. Tax farming was nominally ended, though it persisted under different names (government contracts, revenue farms, etc.).

The Tanzimat period saw the rise of a new elite: the bureaucratic-intellectual class. Educated in reformed Ottoman schools or in Europe, speaking French, reading European philosophy and law, advocating modernization and centralization—this elite staffed the ministries, drafted law codes, and implemented reforms. They included men like Mustafa Reşid Pasha, Midhat Pasha, and other reformist grand viziers and ministers. They were not necessarily from old elite families—some were of modest origins elevated through education and competence.

This bureaucratic elite represented modernization of the old administrative class, adapted to 19th-century conditions. They used modern legal-administrative tools (law codes, bureaucratic procedures, European diplomatic methods) rather than traditional Ottoman methods. But their function was similar to the old devşirme elite—they served the Sultan, implemented centralization, and extracted resources from provinces. The mechanisms modernized, but the basic relationship (elite serving central state in exchange for wealth and power) persisted.

By 1876, the Ottoman elite structure was more diverse and complex than in 1650. It included ayan families who had retained local power despite centralization efforts, bureaucratic-administrative elite staffing Constantinople's ministries, military officers commanding the reformed army, wealthy merchants (often Christians and Jews) who partnered with European capital, and ulema who had lost some power to secular institutions but retained religious authority and educational control.

What united these diverse elite fractions? Control of resources. The ayan controlled land and local revenue. Bureaucrats controlled state positions enabling extraction through salaries, corruption, and connections. Military officers controlled violence. Merchants controlled capital and trade. Ulema controlled education and religious legitimacy. Each fraction needed the others—the state needed local elites to govern provinces, local elites needed state recognition for legitimacy, military force enforced elite property, merchants needed order for commerce, ulema provided ideological cover.

The three monopolies had been distributed but not broken. Wealth was concentrated in fewer hands than ever—land ownership had become more concentrated through the Land Code's effects, tax farming enriched fewer families (even if nominally ended, equivalent mechanisms persisted), and European penetration had created a comprador class accumulating wealth through intermediation. Violence remained entirely under state control—private armies were reduced or eliminated, the reformed military monopolized organized force, and the state's capacity to suppress resistance (though tested by nationalist movements) remained substantial within territories it controlled. Information control was contested—secular education challenged ulema monopoly, nationalist ideas circulated despite censorship, and European influence introduced alternative ideologies—but the state still controlled most education, censored publications, and used ulema to legitimize authority.

Material Outcomes: Did Reform Improve Lives?

The Tanzimat reforms promised improved conditions for ordinary Ottoman subjects—security of property, regular taxation, equality before law, and economic development. Did these promises translate into material improvements, or did extraction intensify under modernized forms?

For peasants, the picture was mixed and generally negative. Formal abolition of arbitrary taxation sounded progressive, but in practice, regularized taxation often meant higher total extraction as the state systematized revenue collection. Tax farming officially ended, but functionally equivalent systems persisted under different names. The Land Code, supposedly clarifying property rights, often resulted in peasants losing customary usage rights as large landowners registered communal lands in their names.

Debt intensified as rural credit markets developed. Peasants could now borrow from banks, moneylenders, and merchants at rates often exceeding 30-50 percent annually. This created debt peonage—peasants working to service debts they could never repay. In some regions, particularly in Syria and Iraq, tribal lands were registered in chiefs' names, converting free tribesmen into tenants or sharecroppers.

Life expectancy data is unreliable for this period, but fragmentary evidence suggests modest improvements in urban areas (perhaps 35-40 years by 1900) while rural areas remained stagnant (30-35 years). Improvements, where they occurred, resulted from reduced plague frequency (quarantine measures were implemented) rather than better nutrition or living conditions. Infant mortality remained very high (over 25-30 percent of children dying before age five).

For urban workers, industrialization created wage labor but under harsh conditions. Textile workers in the few Ottoman factories worked 12-14 hour days for subsistence wages. Dock workers, railroad workers, and construction laborers faced dangerous conditions with no compensation for injuries. The modernization rhetoric promised progress, but for workers it meant new forms of exploitation.

For non-Muslims, Tanzimat reforms brought legal equality on paper but continued discrimination in practice. Christians and Jews could now technically hold government positions, but few were appointed. They could testify in nizamiye courts, but social prejudice persisted. Abolition of the jizya was compensated by military exemption taxes that cost roughly the same. And the reforms antagonized Muslim populations, leading to increased intercommunal violence.

The Armenian Genocide (1915-1917) represented the ultimate failure of Ottomanism and equality. Despite Tanzimat promises of citizenship transcending religion, the Young Turk government would systematically deport and massacre Armenians, killing 600,000 to 1.5 million (estimates vary). This genocide demonstrated that legal reforms meant nothing when the state's violence monopoly could be turned against entire populations.

For the elite, the Tanzimat period was profitable. Land concentration increased as the Land Code enabled appropriation of peasant lands. Trade with Europe enriched merchants and landowners who sold cash crops. Tax farming and government contracts continued enriching

provincial notables. Bureaucratic positions provided salaries, corruption opportunities, and social status. European loans meant European banks profited enormously, but Ottoman intermediaries also took cuts.

Wealth concentration increased substantially in the 19th century. By 1900, the top 5 percent of the population probably controlled 70-80 percent of all wealth, higher concentration than in 1650. The gap between elite and masses widened as some accumulated fortunes from European trade and partnerships while peasant conditions stagnated or worsened.

For our framework, the assessment is clear: reforms modernized extraction mechanisms without redistributing wealth or improving ordinary people's lives. Legal codes, administrative centralization, and secular institutions made the system more efficient at extracting resources while providing ideological cover (equality, modernization, progress) that obscured continued exploitation. The specific institutions changed, but the fundamental relationship—small elite extracting from large majority through control of wealth, violence, and information—not only persisted but intensified.

The Pattern Moving Forward

By 1876, the Ottoman Empire had undergone substantial institutional transformation from its 1650 form. The devşirme system was gone. Janissaries were destroyed. Secular law codes replaced pure sharia in many domains. Centralization had reduced (though not eliminated) ayan autonomy. European economic penetration had fundamentally altered the economy's structure. Nationalist movements had carved away Balkan territories. The empire was recognizably different from its classical form.

Yet the fundamental pattern remained. A small elite controlled most wealth through land ownership and commercial intermediation. That elite used state violence to maintain order and suppress resistance. Religious and now nationalist ideologies legitimized hierarchy and extraction. Ordinary people—peasants, workers, non-Muslims—remained subordinate, exploited, and fragmented.

The question moving into the next period (1876-1923: constitutional experiments, World War I, genocide, empire's collapse) is whether these patterns persist through even greater upheavals. Will constitutional government (attempted in 1876-1878 and 1908-1918) actually constrain elite power or simply provide democratic veneer? Will the Young Turks' revolution transform power structures or adapt them? Will World War I and the empire's collapse destroy the elite, or will they survive and adapt once again?

And most crucially for our central question: When the Turkish Republic emerges from the empire's ruins, will new elites arise, will old elites persist, or will we see fundamental transformation of power structures? The baseline is now established. The transformation from empire to Republic will test whether elite power is resilient enough to survive even the most radical regime change in Turkish history.

Coverage:

- Decline and Crisis (1650-1800): Military defeats, fiscal crisis, rise of provincial ayan demonstrating elite adaptation
- Reform Attempts (1800-1876): Janissary destruction (1826), Tanzimat reforms, European economic penetration
- Resistance and Suppression: Peasant revolts, nationalist movements, labor organizing—all suppressed through violence monopoly
- Assessment: Elite transformed (devşirme→ayan→bureaucrats) but three monopolies persisted; reforms modernized extraction without redistributing wealth; pattern established for tracking through empire's collapse

Part 1 Complete (Sections 1-3, ~42,800 words total covering 1299-1876)

Next: Part 2 will cover 1876-1923 (Constitutional periods, Young Turks, World War I, Armenian Genocide, Greek population exchange, empire's collapse, emergence of Turkish Republic under Kemalist revolution)

TURKEY CASE STUDY - PART 2 SECTION 1

From Ottoman Empire to Turkish Republic (1299-2025)

Constitutional Experiments, Genocide, and Republican Revolution (1876-1923)

PROLOGUE: THREE GENERATIONS, ONE FAMILY

Ankara, November 1923

Mehmet Bey sat in the newly established parliament building, now representing Konya province in the Grand National Assembly of the Turkish Republic. At fifty-three, he had witnessed and participated in transformations that would have seemed impossible in his youth. His grandfather had been an ayan notable controlling tax farms in central Anatolia. His father had adapted during the Tanzimat, converting informal power into legal land ownership through the 1858 Land Code, registering thousands of acres of what had been communal village lands in the family name.

Mehmet himself had been educated in the reformed Ottoman schools, studied law in Constantinople, joined the Committee of Union and Progress (Young Turks) in his twenties, served as a provincial administrator during World War I, and then—crucially—allied with Mustafa Kemal's nationalist movement during the War of Independence. His family's lands had been expanded during the war through acquisition of properties "abandoned" by deported Armenians and fleeing Greeks. Now he sat in parliament, a respectable member of the new regime, his family's wealth intact and his political position secure.

The Republic's founding declaration had just been announced. The Sultan was gone, the Caliphate would soon follow, and Turkey was to be a modern, secular nation-state. Mehmet had voted for all of it. The rhetoric was revolutionary—breaking with the Ottoman past, creating a new Turkey, ending religious authority's dominance, establishing popular sovereignty.

But looking around the chamber, Mehmet recognized familiar faces. The deputy from Izmir was from the Çamlıca family, another ayan lineage that had parlayed provincial power into Republican positions. The deputy from Bursa had been a Young Turk colleague during the Constitutional period. The deputy from Erzurum was a military officer who had fought alongside Kemal. The Minister of Economy was a wealthy merchant whose family had grown rich on European trade during the late Ottoman period.

These were not peasants or workers who had seized power through revolution. They were the same class that had ruled the empire, now ruling the Republic under different titles and ideologies. The institutions had changed—parliament instead of Divan, secular law instead of şeriat, Turkish nationalism instead of Ottoman imperialism. But who held power? The same families who had held it before, or at least those who had been smart enough to align with the nationalists rather than the Sultan.

Mehmet thought about what had actually changed. His family had lost some wealth during the wars—inflation, requisitions, disruptions. But they had gained more through appropriation of minority properties. The ayan system was officially ended, but they owned the land now through legal title rather than tax farming contracts. The Caliphate would be abolished, but his family had never derived power from religious authority anyway—they controlled productive assets, which mattered more than ideological superstructure.

The violence monopoly? It had passed from the Sultan's forces to the nationalist army, but the principle was identical—whoever controlled organized violence controlled the state. The difference was that the Republic's army was explicitly Turkish and nationalist rather than Ottoman and multi-ethnic, but the function (suppressing resistance, enforcing elite authority, maintaining order) remained the same.

The information monopoly? The Republic would establish secular schools, but his class would control them. The ulema would lose power, but new ideologues—nationalist intellectuals, Kemalist educators—would serve similar functions, teaching populations to accept the new order as natural and necessary.

Mehmet smiled slightly. The revolutionaries thought they had transformed everything. In a sense, they had—the Ottoman Empire was gone, the Republic was real, and the changes were not merely cosmetic. But the fundamental structure of power? His family controlled land and capital. The state controlled violence. Nationalist ideology legitimized both. The peasants who worked his family's fields were no freer than they had been under his grandfather's tax farming regime—they were still dependent, still subordinate, still paying most of what they produced to those who owned the land.

The Republic was genuine revolution in political form. But in economic substance, in the distribution of wealth and power, in the relationship between those who owned and those who worked? That had adapted rather than transformed. The Ottoman elite who had been flexible enough, ruthless enough, and lucky enough to survive the wars and align with the nationalists were now the Republican elite. Different titles, different rhetoric, same class domination.

As the session concluded and deputies filed out to celebrate the Republic's founding, Mehmet reflected that his grandfather would have understood perfectly. Power derived from control of productive assets and access to state violence. Ideologies changed—Ottoman imperialism, constitutionalism, Turkish nationalism—but the underlying structure persisted. Those who owned the land and commanded the guns made the rules, whatever those rules were called.

The Republic would face many challenges in the decades ahead. But Mehmet was confident his family would adapt to each new phase, just as they had adapted from ayan tax farmers to Tanzimat landlords to Young Turk administrators to Republican deputies. The art of elite survival was knowing when to defend the old order and when to embrace the new, always ensuring that beneath the surface transformations, fundamental power relationships remained favorable to those who already possessed wealth and connections.

I. CONSTITUTIONAL EXPERIMENTS: FORM WITHOUT SUBSTANCE (1876-1908)

The First Constitutional Period (1876-1878)

The promulgation of the Ottoman Constitution (Kanun-ı Esasi) on December 23, 1876, represented a dramatic departure from centuries of absolutist rule. For the first time in Ottoman history, a constitution limited the Sultan's authority, established a parliament with elected representatives, and proclaimed rights for Ottoman subjects. The document promised freedom of religion, equality before law, protection from arbitrary arrest, and representative government.

The context of the constitution's creation reveals its limits. Sultan Abdülhamid II, who had just acceded to the throne in August 1876, faced a desperate situation. The empire was bankrupt, having defaulted on foreign loans in 1875. Nationalist rebellions raged in the Balkans—Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Bulgaria were in revolt, with Ottoman forces suppressing them through massacres that provoked European outrage. Russia was preparing for war, using protection of Orthodox Christians as justification. European powers were discussing partition of Ottoman territories.

The reformist statesman Midhat Pasha and other constitutionalists convinced Abdülhamid that adopting a constitution would strengthen the empire's position. It would demonstrate Ottoman commitment to reform, potentially satisfying European demands. It would channel domestic dissent into parliamentary debate rather than rebellion. And it would create the appearance of popular government while preserving sultanic authority in practice.

The constitution's text demonstrated these contradictions. Article 7 declared that "All subjects of the Empire are called Ottomans without distinction whatever faith they profess" and guaranteed equality before law. But Article 11 designated Islam as the state religion. Article 4 made the Sultan's person "sacred" and "not subject to responsibility." Article 7 guaranteed freedom of the press, but Article 12 allowed the Sultan to exile anyone "who, on the advice of the Council of Ministers, is recognized as dangerous to the safety of the State."

Most crucially, Article 113 gave the Sultan power to exile anyone "whose presence in the Empire is considered detrimental" without trial or appeal. And the Sultan retained command of military

forces, authority to appoint all officials including ministers and senators, and power to prorogue (suspend) parliament at will.

The first parliament convened in March 1877, elected through a two-stage process that ensured only wealthy property owners actually voted. The 115 deputies represented diverse backgrounds—landowners, merchants, ulema, bureaucrats, representing various ethnic and religious communities from across the empire. The Chamber of Deputies held real debates, with opposition members criticizing government policies, particularly regarding the ongoing war with Russia.

But Abdülhamid never intended the parliament to actually constrain his authority. When deputies proved too critical, particularly regarding military defeats in the Russo-Turkish War (1877-1878), he prorogued parliament on February 13, 1878, ostensibly temporarily. The "temporary" suspension would last thirty years. The constitution remained officially in force, but without parliament convening, it was meaningless.

The brief constitutional experiment demonstrated several patterns crucial for our framework. First, institutional forms (constitution, parliament, elections) could exist without transforming actual power relationships. The Sultan retained control of violence through the military, controlled appointments of all officials, and could suspend the only institution with any democratic mandate. Second, elite factions could support constitutionalism as a tactic for managing crises without genuinely redistributing power. Third, when institutions threatened to actually constrain elite authority, they could be suspended or neutralized.

For ordinary Ottoman subjects, the constitutional period changed little. Peasants still paid the same taxes to the same landowners. Workers still labored under the same harsh conditions. Non-Muslims still faced discrimination despite nominal equality. The parliament's brief existence provided some space for airing grievances, but without power to enforce changes, it was theater rather than transformation.

Hamidian Autocracy (1878-1908)

With parliament suspended, Sultan Abdülhamid II established personal autocracy that would last three decades. His reign combined modernization of state institutions with intensified repression, creating a surveillance state that suppressed dissent while pursuing selective reforms.

Abdülhamid's autocracy rested on several pillars. First, he cultivated the military, ensuring officers' loyalty through patronage, regular pay, and promotions. He expanded military schools, hired European advisors to modernize training, and built a rail network partly to enable rapid troop deployments to trouble spots. The army became the regime's primary support, and Abdülhamid rewarded military loyalty by tolerating corruption and protecting officers from accountability.

Second, he created an extensive spy network. The secret police (Yıldız Intelligence Service) operated throughout the empire, infiltrating opposition groups, monitoring foreign embassies, reading mail, and reporting on suspected dissidents. Informers were recruited from all classes—servants in elite households, workers in factories, even ulema in mosques. The atmosphere of surveillance created paranoia that discouraged open opposition.

Third, he censored publications ruthlessly. Books, newspapers, and periodicals were subjected to strict pre-publication review. Works deemed politically dangerous were banned. Terms like "revolution," "constitution," and even "freedom" were prohibited in some contexts. Foreign publications were restricted. Theaters were monitored for seditious content. The effect was to create an intellectual desert where critical thought struggled to survive.

Fourth, he emphasized Islamic identity to legitimize his rule. Abdülhamid styled himself as Caliph, protector of Islam and Muslims worldwide. He sponsored pan-Islamic policies, cultivating relationships with Muslim leaders from India to Africa, presenting the Ottoman Empire as Islam's defender against European colonialism. This pan-Islamism served dual purposes—it generated support from Muslim populations while presenting the Sultan as too important to overthrow (doing so would harm all Muslims, not just the empire).

Fifth, he balanced European powers against each other. Abdülhamid granted concessions to British, French, and German interests in ways that prevented any single power from dominating. The Baghdad Railway concession went to Germans, irritating British. Strategic positions were granted to different powers, ensuring all had stakes in Ottoman survival. This diplomatic manipulation bought time and prevented European coordination for partition.

The Hamidian system was not simply reactionary autocracy—it included modernization efforts. The military was reorganized and re-equipped. The Hijaz Railway was built, connecting Damascus to Mecca, facilitating hajj pilgrimage and demonstrating Ottoman commitment to Islam. Schools were expanded (though carefully controlled to prevent subversive ideas). Public works projects improved infrastructure in some regions. The empire's finances stabilized under the Ottoman Public Debt Administration's management (though this meant European control of revenue).

But modernization served autocracy rather than threatening it. Modern communication (telegraph, railways) enabled faster central control. Modern military organization strengthened the violence monopoly. Education taught loyalty to Sultan and Islam. Infrastructure projects demonstrated the regime's effectiveness. These weren't reforms empowering subjects but tools strengthening the state's capacity to extract resources and suppress resistance.

The Armenian massacres (1894-1896), discussed earlier, exemplified Hamidian rule's character. When Armenian nationalist organizations emerged and conducted some acts of terrorism, Abdülhamid's response was systematic collective punishment. The Hamidiye regiments (Kurdish irregular cavalry) and regular troops killed tens of thousands of Armenians in eastern Anatolia. The violence served multiple purposes—it suppressed Armenian nationalism through terror, it rewarded Kurdish tribal leaders whose loyalty the regime cultivated, and it

demonstrated to other populations that nationalist resistance would be met with overwhelming violence.

European powers protested but took no effective action, demonstrating that Abdülhamid's diplomatic strategy worked—he had made the empire valuable enough to each power that none wanted to risk conflict by intervening too forcefully. The massacres also revealed that "civilized" European concerns about atrocities were selective—intervention occurred in the Balkans where European interests were engaged, but not in eastern Anatolia where they weren't.

For our framework, the Hamidian period demonstrates that autocracy can be perfectly compatible with selective modernization. The three monopolies were maintained and strengthened—wealth remained concentrated (land ownership continued consolidating, with some ayan families accumulating more through Abdülhamid's patronage), violence was monopolized by state and used systematically against resistance, and information was tightly controlled through censorship and surveillance.

The opposition that would eventually overthrow this system—the Young Turks—emerged not from peasants or workers but from within the elite itself. Military officers, bureaucrats, and intellectuals who had absorbed European liberal and nationalist ideas concluded that Abdülhamid's autocracy was ruining the empire. They didn't seek to empower the masses but to modernize the state by adopting constitutional governance. Their revolution would replace personal autocracy with oligarchic constitutionalism, but as we'll see, it wouldn't fundamentally redistribute power.

The Young Turk Revolution (1908)

The revolution that forced Abdülhamid II to restore the constitution in July 1908 began not in Constantinople but in the provinces, led by military officers of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP, commonly called the Young Turks). Understanding this revolution's character and limits is essential for tracking elite continuity.

The CUP had been founded in the 1890s by Ottoman exiles in Paris, influenced by European liberal and nationalist thought. Its membership included military officers, bureaucrats, teachers, and professionals—educated elite dissatisfied with Hamidian autocracy but not seeking social revolution. Their program demanded constitutional government, equal rights for all Ottoman subjects regardless of religion, and modernization to save the empire from European domination and internal collapse.

The revolution's trigger was military. In July 1908, CUP-affiliated officers in the Macedonian armies revolted, refusing to obey orders and demanding restoration of the constitution. When Abdülhamid sent forces to suppress them, those forces defected to the rebels. Faced with army mutiny, Abdülhamid had no choice—on July 24, 1908, he announced restoration of the 1876 constitution and called for elections.

The revolution's success without bloodshed in the capital created euphoric celebrations. Different ethnic and religious communities marched together, proclaiming brotherhood. Muslims, Christians, and Jews embraced in the streets, declaring the dawn of Ottomanism—a supra-ethnic identity transcending religious divisions. The euphoria was genuine but brief.

Elections for the new parliament occurred in late 1908. The CUP won overwhelming majorities through a combination of genuine popularity, organizational advantage, and electoral manipulation. The Second Constitutional Period (1908-1918) began with high hopes that constitutional government would solve the empire's problems.

But several features limited this revolution's transformative potential. First, the CUP was not a mass party but a elite organization—military officers, urban professionals, and intellectuals dominated. Its base was concentrated in cities, particularly Salonica and Constantinople. Rural populations, the vast majority, were barely mobilized or represented. Second, the CUP's program was nationalist modernization, not social revolution. They wanted to strengthen the state, not redistribute wealth or empower workers and peasants. Third, the CUP respected property rights—land reform, wealth redistribution, or challenges to elite economic power were not on the agenda.

The parliament included landowners, merchants, and professionals. No workers or peasants sat in the chamber. Voting was restricted by property qualifications and literacy, excluding most of the population. When labor strikes occurred in 1908-1909 (workers hoped constitutional government would protect labor rights), the CUP government suppressed them using the same methods as the old regime—police violence, arrests of organizers, employer-friendly laws.

The counter-revolution of April 1909 (the "31 March Incident") demonstrated the fragility of constitutional rule. Conservative military units, ulema opposed to secularization, and Islamist groups opposed to the CUP's modernizing reforms revolted in Constantinople, demanding restoration of şeriat and limiting CUP influence. The CUP-led "Army of Action" marched from Salonica, defeated the counter-revolutionaries, and deposed Abdülhamid II, replacing him with his brother Mehmed V (a weak figurehead who would reign without ruling).

The suppression was ruthless—hundreds were executed, including some ulema accused of supporting the counter-revolution. The CUP emerged stronger, but the incident revealed that constitutional government's survival depended on military force, not popular support or institutional strength. The parliament continued, but the CUP increasingly ruled through extra-constitutional means—controlling elections, pressuring deputies, and making decisions in party councils rather than parliamentary debates.

By 1913, after defeats in the Balkan Wars, the CUP had effectively established a dictatorship. A coup in January 1913 (the "Sublime Porte raid") brought CUP leaders Enver, Talat, and Cemal to power. They maintained constitutional forms—parliament still met, elections still occurred—but real power resided in the CUP Central Committee. Opposition was suppressed, press freedom was curtailed, and dissent was punished.

For our framework, the Young Turk Revolution demonstrates that institutional change (restoring the constitution, creating elected parliament, establishing political parties) doesn't necessarily transform power structures when the elite implementing changes seeks to preserve fundamental hierarchies. The CUP modernized Ottoman governance, secularized institutions, and promoted Turkish nationalism, but they didn't challenge property concentration, didn't empower workers or peasants, and maintained the violence monopoly in state hands (specifically, military hands, which meant their hands).

The revolution did transform some things—ulema power decreased as secular institutions expanded, Ottoman multi-ethnic identity began giving way to Turkish nationalism, and governance methods modernized. But the three monopolies persisted: wealth remained concentrated in elite hands, violence was monopolized by state (military), and information control passed from Hamidian censorship to CUP propaganda but remained controlled rather than freed.

II. BALKAN WARS AND ETHNIC TRANSFORMATION (1912-1913)

Military Disaster and Territorial Loss

The Balkan Wars (1912-1913) represented catastrophic military defeats that cost the empire nearly all its European territories and fundamentally transformed its demographic character. Understanding these wars' impact requires examining both the immediate territorial losses and the longer-term consequences for elite power and nationalist ideology.

The First Balkan War began in October 1912 when Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece, and Montenegro—having formed an alliance with Russian backing—attacked the Ottoman Empire simultaneously. The empire's military, weakened by political instability and inadequately prepared, collapsed rapidly. Within months, Ottoman forces were driven from Macedonia, Thrace, and Albania. The Bulgarian army advanced to the Çatalca lines just 30 kilometers from Constantinople, threatening the capital itself.

The empire sued for peace in May 1913, signing the Treaty of London which surrendered almost all European territories west of the Çatalca-Midye line. The losses were staggering—territories that had been Ottoman for 500 years, containing perhaps 3-4 million people, were gone. The psychological shock was profound—the "sick man of Europe" was dying, and nothing seemed capable of stopping the decline.

The Second Balkan War (June-July 1913) occurred when the victors fought among themselves over the spoils. The Ottoman Empire, taking advantage of the distraction, recaptured Edirne (Adrianople), a symbolic victory that partially salvaged military pride. But the overall result was

devastating territorial loss and the effective end of the empire's European presence except for a small region around Constantinople.

The wars' immediate consequences included massive refugee flows. Perhaps 400,000-600,000 Muslims (Turks, Albanians, Bosnians, Circassians) fled or were expelled from lost territories, creating a humanitarian crisis. These refugees—called muhacir—arrived in Anatolia impoverished, traumatized, and often hostile toward Christian populations whom they blamed for their displacement. The CUP government struggled to resettle them, sometimes placing them in areas where Armenian or Greek populations predominated, creating intercommunal tensions.

The military defeats radicalized the CUP leadership. They concluded that the empire's multi-ethnic character was a fatal weakness—Christians had supported Balkan states against the empire, proving they couldn't be trusted. This strengthened Turkish nationalism within CUP ideology and created a mindset that would culminate in genocide—if Ottoman Christians were fifth columns for the empire's enemies, drastic measures were justified to ensure Anatolia remained securely Turkish.

The economic consequences were severe. Lost territories had been economically productive—Macedonian tobacco, Thracian agriculture, port cities. Tax revenues fell dramatically. The refugee crisis strained finances. European creditors, already controlling Ottoman finances through the OPDA, demanded additional reforms as conditions for new loans. The empire was bankrupt and dependent.

For elite power structures, the Balkan Wars had mixed effects. Some elite families lost properties in the lost territories, though many had already transferred assets to Anatolia or Constantinople. The ayan class's last remnants in the Balkans disappeared (those who were Muslim fled to Anatolia, those who were Christian became citizens of the new Balkan states). But in Anatolia, where the core of Ottoman power now resided, elite landholding persisted and even expanded as Christian-owned properties were appropriated.

The military elite's power increased. The defeat discredited civilian politicians and diplomats who were blamed for mismanaging the empire. Military officers, particularly those in the CUP, argued that only military discipline and strength could save what remained. The January 1913 coup brought military men (Enver Pasha, himself a CUP military officer, would become Minister of War) to dominant positions. The militarization of politics that would characterize late Ottoman and early Republican Turkey accelerated.

Population Exchanges and Ethnic Cleansing

The Balkan Wars initiated population exchanges and ethnic cleansing that would intensify during World War I and culminate in the Lausanne Treaty's population exchanges of 1923. Understanding this process reveals how Turkish nationalism transformed from ideology to demographic reality through systematic violence and forced migration.

The muhacir (Muslim refugees) fleeing the Balkans represented the empire's shrinking to its Anatolian core. But the CUP leadership didn't accept this passively—they began envisioning Anatolia as purely Turkish, requiring removal or assimilation of non-Turkish populations.

Greeks were the first major target. The Ottoman Greek population, concentrated in western Anatolia's coastal cities and in Pontus (Black Sea coast), numbered perhaps 1.5-2 million. They were economically significant—dominating commerce in Izmir and other ports, controlling much of the trade with Europe, and comprising a substantial merchant and professional class.

Beginning in 1913-1914, the CUP government initiated what would later be called the "Greek persecution"—boycotts of Greek businesses, forced migrations of Greek populations from coastal areas inland, and violence against Greek communities. The ostensible justification was that Ottoman Greeks were supporting Greece (which had just taken Ottoman territories in the Balkan Wars) and constituted a security threat. The actual purpose was economic and demographic transformation—removing Greek economic dominance and clearing areas for Turkish settlement.

Estimates suggest 100,000-300,000 Greeks fled or were expelled from Anatolia between 1913-1914. This was ethnic cleansing—using state violence and organized mobs to force a population out based on ethnicity. It was also economic expropriation—Greek properties and businesses were seized and transferred to Turkish Muslims, often CUP members or their clients.

The pattern would intensify with Armenians during World War I (discussed next section), and culminate with the Lausanne Treaty's population exchanges forcing 1.2 million Greeks out of Turkey and 400,000 Turks out of Greece in 1923. By 1923, the population transformation would be nearly complete—Anatolia, which in 1912 had been roughly 75-80% Muslim and 20-25% Christian, would be over 95% Muslim.

This demographic transformation had profound economic and political consequences. The Christian commercial and professional classes—Greeks in trade, Armenians in crafts and professions—were removed, their properties and businesses transferred to Muslims. This created a Muslim Turkish bourgeoisie rapidly, but not through capitalist development or accumulation. They acquired wealth through state-sponsored appropriation, creating dependency on the nationalist regime rather than autonomous economic power.

For our framework, this population transformation demonstrates how elite power can be restructured through ethnic cleansing while maintaining fundamental hierarchies. The specific families controlling commercial wealth changed (Greeks out, Turkish Muslims in), but wealth concentration persisted. The CUP leadership and their clients acquired properties, positioning themselves to become the Republic's bourgeoisie. The violence monopoly was used systematically for demographic engineering, creating a homogeneous nation-state from multi-ethnic empire.

The suffering this caused is incomprehensible in aggregate statistics—millions of people forcibly displaced, hundreds of thousands killed, communities that had existed for millennia destroyed, cultural diversity eliminated through systematic violence. But from the elite perspective, it was successful state-building—creating the demographic homogeneity that nationalism required and transferring wealth to politically reliable populations.

III. WORLD WAR I AND GENOCIDE (1914-1918)

Ottoman Entry and Enver's Gamble

The Ottoman Empire's entry into World War I on the side of the Central Powers (Germany and Austria-Hungary) in November 1914 was not inevitable but resulted from specific elite calculations and German influence over CUP leaders, particularly Enver Pasha.

Enver, who had become Minister of War after the January 1913 coup, was convinced that alliance with Germany offered the empire's best chance for survival and recovery. Germany was the rising military power, had no territorial designs on Ottoman lands (unlike Russia, Britain, or France), and offered military advisors, weapons, and financial support. Enver believed German victory would enable the empire to recover lost territories and establish Turkish dominance over a Central Asian empire (Turanism—the idea that Turkic peoples from Anatolia to Central Asia should be united).

Other CUP leaders had doubts. Talat Pasha preferred neutrality, recognizing the risks of backing the wrong side. But German pressure, promises of support, and the secret treaty signed in August 1914 committed the empire to war. When Ottoman warships (under German command) bombarded Russian ports in October 1914, war became inevitable.

The decision would prove catastrophic. Ottoman forces fought on multiple fronts—against Russia in the Caucasus, against Britain in Mesopotamia and Palestine, against Allied forces at Gallipoli, and against the Arab Revolt in Arabia. The empire lacked industrial capacity to sustain modern warfare, depended on German supplies that often didn't arrive, and faced enemies with superior resources.

Enver's military strategy was disastrous. His offensive against Russia in winter 1914-1915 (the Sarıkamış campaign) ended in catastrophe—90,000 Ottoman troops died, mostly from freezing in inadequate winter equipment, and the army was destroyed. The defeat opened eastern Anatolia to Russian invasion and created the crisis that the CUP would use to justify the Armenian genocide.

For our framework, Ottoman entry into World War I demonstrates how elite factions can make decisions that destroy the state they ostensibly govern. Enver's ambitions (recovering territory, building Turanian empire, modernizing through German methods) served his ideological vision

but not the empire's interests or its population's welfare. Millions would die, the empire would be destroyed, and populations would be devastated so that CUP leaders could pursue fantasies of military glory and ethnic empire.

The costs fell on ordinary subjects—conscripted soldiers dying in hopeless campaigns, civilians starving as war requisitions took their food, minorities targeted as scapegoats for military failures. The elite, particularly CUP leaders who survived, would eventually find positions in the new regime. The pattern of elite decisions causing mass suffering but elite survival would persist.

The Armenian Genocide (1915-1917)

The systematic destruction of the Ottoman Armenian population represents the empire's most horrific crime and demonstrates how the violence monopoly can be used for eliminationist purposes when elite ideology combines with crisis conditions. While this section cannot fully document the genocide (that would require a separate study), understanding its essential features is necessary for tracking elite power and violence.

The Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire in 1914 numbered approximately 1.5-2 million (estimates vary). They were concentrated in eastern Anatolia, with significant populations in Constantinople, Izmir, and other cities. Armenians were largely Christian (Armenian Apostolic Church), spoke Armenian, and had distinct cultural identity. Economically, they were diverse—peasants in eastern Anatolia, artisans and craftsmen in cities, professionals and merchants in urban centers.

Armenian nationalist movements had emerged in the late 19th century, some seeking autonomy within the empire, others seeking independence, a few using terrorism against Ottoman officials. The vast majority of Armenians were not politically active, but CUP leaders increasingly viewed all Armenians as potential fifth columnists supporting Russia (a Christian power that claimed to protect Ottoman Christians).

The genocide began in April 1915 with arrests of Armenian intellectuals, professionals, and community leaders in Constantinople—hundreds were seized, deported, and most were killed. This decapitated Armenian leadership, preventing organized resistance. Subsequently, the CUP government ordered deportation of the entire Armenian population from eastern Anatolia, allegedly for security reasons (proximity to the Russian front).

The "deportations" were death marches. Armenian populations were forcibly marched toward Syria through desert routes without adequate food, water, or shelter. Men were typically separated and executed. Women and children were marched under guard by Special Organization units (Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa) and Kurdish irregular forces. Massacres were systematic—convoys were attacked, people were killed outright or left to die of starvation and exposure, women were raped and enslaved, children were abducted.

The number who died will never be precisely known. Estimates range from 600,000 to 1.5 million Armenians killed, with scholars generally accepting figures around 800,000-1,000,000. Entire communities were eradicated. Armenian cultural sites—churches, schools, monasteries—were destroyed. Properties were confiscated and distributed to Muslims. By 1918, the Armenian presence in eastern Anatolia had been largely eliminated.

The genocide was not spontaneous violence or accidental suffering during wartime chaos. It was systematic state policy, ordered from the top (CUP Central Committee), implemented through government structures (deportation orders, gendarmerie escorts, local authorities), and coordinated across regions. Telegraph communications show directives from Constantinople to provincial governors. Survivor testimony documents systematic planning. The Special Organization units were deliberately created for killing.

The justifications offered then and now—that Armenians were traitorous, that deportations were military necessity, that deaths resulted from civil war conditions—do not withstand scrutiny. The vast majority of deported were women, children, and elderly (men of military age were already conscripted or killed). The deportation routes led to desert death rather than safe relocation. The systematic nature of killing demonstrates intent to destroy the population, not relocate it.

For our framework, the Armenian genocide reveals several crucial patterns. First, the violence monopoly that maintained elite power throughout Ottoman history could be redirected toward eliminationist goals when ideological radicalization (Turkish nationalism combined with wartime crisis) overrode pragmatic governance. Second, the state's bureaucratic and military apparatus implemented genocide efficiently—proving that modern administrative capacity can serve industrialized killing, not just governance or extraction.

Third, the genocide transferred enormous wealth from Armenians to Muslims, creating rapid accumulation for those who acquired properties, businesses, and assets. Armenian-owned shops, factories, houses, and land were distributed to CUP members, local notables, and muhacir refugees. This appropriation created vested interests in preventing Armenian return and denying the genocide—admitting it would raise questions about property rightfully belonging to survivors or heirs.

Fourth, the genocide's perpetrators mostly escaped punishment. Some CUP leaders fled and were assassinated by Armenian revenge-seekers. But many officials, military officers, and Special Organization members who implemented genocide transitioned smoothly to positions in the Republic. The violence they committed during genocide was not obstacle to later careers—sometimes it was credential, demonstrating nationalist loyalty and ruthlessness.

For elite continuity, this matters enormously. The Turkish Republic emerged from the ruins of an empire that had just committed genocide. Many of the Republic's founders and early leaders had been involved in or complicit with the genocide. The properties confiscated from Armenians formed part of the wealth base that Turkish Muslim elites accumulated. The ideology of Turkish nationalism that motivated genocide became the Republic's official ideology.

This doesn't mean the Republic was founded on genocide or that all its leaders were genocidaires. But it means the elite continuity question can't ignore that the transition from empire to Republic involved systematic violence that enriched those who would become the Republic's elite while eliminating populations who might have challenged Turkish domination.

Wartime Economy and Elite Profiteering

World War I imposed enormous suffering on Ottoman populations—conscription took men from farms and workshops, requisitions seized food and livestock, inflation destroyed purchasing power, blockades prevented imports, and government bonds extracted remaining wealth. But while ordinary subjects suffered, some elite factions profited from wartime chaos through corruption, black markets, and government contracts.

The CUP government attempted to create a Muslim Turkish bourgeoisie through wartime economic policies. The "National Economy" (Milli İktisat) program sought to transfer economic power from minorities to Muslim Turks. This involved forced buyouts of Christian businesses, preferential government contracts to Turkish firms, and regulations favoring Muslim merchants.

Wartime profiteers, derisively called "plunderers" (vurguncu), accumulated fortunes through corruption and black markets. Government contracts for military supplies provided opportunities for massive markups and kickbacks. Officials took bribes to exempt people from conscription or requisitions. Merchants hoarded goods to sell at inflated prices during shortages. Currency speculation yielded profits as the Ottoman lira collapsed.

Some of the wealth accumulated through wartime profiteering would form the capital base for Republican-era industrialists. Families that made fortunes during the war invested in post-war businesses, purchased properties, and established themselves as the Turkish bourgeoisie. This pattern of state-facilitated accumulation through crisis rather than productive investment would characterize much of Turkish capitalism.

The wealth transfer from minorities to Muslims during the war was systematic and state-supported. Armenian properties confiscated during genocide were distributed or sold cheaply to Muslims. Greek businesses in coastal areas were boycotted and forced out. Jewish merchants faced pressure to sell to Muslim partners. The "Turkish" economy that the CUP wanted to create was built partly on expropriation.

For workers and peasants, the war meant intensified exploitation. Conscription took labor from agriculture, reducing production. Requisitions took whatever peasants produced, leaving them starving. Women and children worked fields without adequate tools or draft animals (requisitioned for military use). Urban workers faced wage freezes while prices hyperinflated. Strikes were suppressed as treasonous during wartime.

Mortality rates during the war were catastrophic. Perhaps 2.5-3 million Ottoman subjects died during World War I (military deaths roughly 750,000-800,000, civilian deaths from starvation, disease, and violence perhaps 1.5-2 million). In eastern Anatolia, between Armenian genocide

victims, wartime starvation, and epidemic diseases, populations collapsed by 50% or more in some regions.

For our framework, the wartime economy demonstrates how crises accelerate wealth transfers while maintaining hierarchies. Elite factions (CUP officials, military officers, merchants with connections) accumulated through corruption and confiscation. Muslim Turks as a group gained wealth transferred from Christians. But ordinary Muslims suffered enormously—the wealth transfers went to those already positioned to profit (those with political connections, capital to invest in black markets, or positions enabling corruption).

The war destroyed enormous wealth while redistributing what remained upward and toward Turkish Muslims. This pattern of accumulation through crisis and expropriation rather than productive investment would shape Republican capitalism. The Turkish bourgeoisie emerged not from gradual capitalist development but from wartime plunder and genocide-enabled appropriation.

Coverage:

- Constitutional experiments (1876-1878, 1908-1918): Form without substance, CUP dictatorship
- Young Turk Revolution (1908): Elite-led, preserved property rights, suppressed labor
- Balkan Wars (1912-1913): Territorial collapse, refugee crisis, radicalization toward ethnic nationalism
- Population exchanges: Greeks expelled 1913-1914, pattern established for 1923
- WWI entry: Enver's gamble, disastrous campaigns
- Armenian Genocide (1915-1917): Systematic state violence, wealth transfer to Muslims, perpetrators unpunished
- Wartime economy: Profiteering, corruption, Muslim bourgeoisie creation through expropriation

Next Section (Part 2 Section 2) Will Cover:

- Ottoman defeat and occupation (1918-1919)
- War of Independence (1919-1922)
- Lausanne Treaty (1923) and population exchanges
- Elite continuity from empire to Republic
- Assessment: Did elites disappear, get replaced, or adapt?

TURKEY CASE STUDY - PART 2 SECTION 2

From Ottoman Empire to Turkish Republic (1299-2025)

Defeat, Occupation, and National Resistance (1918-1923)

IV. OTTOMAN DEFEAT AND OCCUPATION (1918-1920)

The Mudros Armistice and Allied Occupation

The Ottoman Empire's military collapse in October 1918 brought foreign occupation that would paradoxically enable Turkish nationalist resistance and ultimately the empire's transformation into the Republic. Understanding the occupation's character and the elite response reveals how crisis created opportunities for regime transformation while preserving fundamental power structures.

The Mudros Armistice, signed on October 30, 1918, was a document of surrender granting Allied powers sweeping authority over Ottoman territories. The terms were harsh: Ottoman forces would demobilize, Allied troops could occupy any strategic point, Allied warships could control the Straits, and the empire would surrender all non-Turkish territories. Effectively, the empire ceased to exist as a functioning state—it was occupied, its military dissolved, and its government subordinate to Allied commands.

The CUP leadership, recognizing the catastrophe their policies had produced, fled. Talat, Enver, and Cemal Pasha escaped on a German submarine in November 1918, eventually reaching Germany and exile. They left behind an empire in ruins—territories lost, economy destroyed, population devastated, and government discredited. The Sultan's government, now freed from CUP control, attempted to cooperate with Allied occupation authorities, hoping to salvage something from the disaster.

Allied occupation forces arrived throughout late 1918 and 1919. British forces occupied Constantinople, the Straits zone, and Mesopotamia (Iraq). French forces occupied Cilicia in southern Anatolia and Syria. Italian forces occupied southwestern Anatolia around Antalya. Greek forces, with Allied backing, landed at Izmir in May 1919 and began advancing into the interior. The sultan's government protested these occupations but lacked power to resist.

The occupation's character varied by occupier. The British generally maintained order and worked through Ottoman administrative structures where they existed. The French pursued more aggressive policies in Syria and Cilicia, facing Arab and Turkish resistance. The Italians

occupied lightly, concerned primarily with securing their sphere of influence. The Greeks, however, approached occupation as beginning the recovery of ancient Greek territories in Asia Minor—their forces conducted ethnic cleansing, burning Turkish villages, and massacring Muslim populations in some areas.

For Ottoman elites, the occupation created a crisis requiring decisions. One faction, represented by the Sultan's government, chose collaboration—accepting occupation as inevitable, hoping to preserve the monarchy, and working with Allied authorities to maintain what order they could. They signed the Treaty of Sèvres (August 1920), which would have partitioned Anatolia among Allied powers, granted Armenia independence in eastern Anatolia, created an autonomous Kurdish region, maintained capitulations, and left Turkey as a rump state controlling only central Anatolia.

But another elite faction, centered on military officers and provincial notables, rejected this surrender. They saw Allied occupation and the Sèvres Treaty as national extinction—Turkey would become a colony or disappear entirely. This faction, led by Mustafa Kemal Pasha (later Atatürk), would organize resistance that culminated in the War of Independence and the Republic's creation.

Mustafa Kemal's Arrival in Anatolia

Mustafa Kemal Pasha was a military officer whose career exemplified the Young Turk generation—educated in modern military schools, influenced by European ideas, experienced in Balkan Wars and World War I campaigns, and convinced that Turkey's survival required radical modernization. But he was not a revolutionary seeking social transformation; he was a nationalist seeking to save Turkey from partition through military force and diplomatic maneuvering.

Born in 1881 in Salonica, Kemal had risen through military ranks through competence and political connections. He distinguished himself at Gallipoli in 1915 (the Ottoman Empire's only major victory in World War I), commanded forces in Syria and Caucasus, and emerged from the war with a reputation as one of the empire's most capable generals. But he had also been critical of the CUP leadership, particularly Enver's strategic mistakes, making him politically suspect to the wartime government.

In May 1919, the Sultan's government appointed Kemal as inspector-general of the army in eastern Anatolia, ostensibly to supervise demobilization and maintain order as Allied occupation authorities required. But Kemal saw this appointment as an opportunity. Landing at Samsun on May 19, 1919, he began organizing resistance to Allied occupation and Greek invasion rather than implementing demobilization.

Kemal's genius was political as much as military. He understood that successful resistance required three elements: military force, political legitimacy, and international recognition. He would build all three by creating parallel state structures that claimed to represent Turkish national will against a collaborating Sultan's government.

The military force came from Ottoman army officers who refused to accept defeat. When the Ottoman military was supposed to demobilize, many units simply melted into the Anatolian countryside with their weapons, forming the nucleus of nationalist resistance forces. Officers who had fought in World War I—men like İsmet İnönü, Fevzi Çakmak, and others—rallied to Kemal, providing professional military leadership to what was initially an irregular resistance movement.

Political legitimacy came from congresses that Kemal organized. The Erzurum Congress (July-August 1919) and Sivas Congress (September 1919) brought together delegates from across Anatolia—military officers, provincial notables, ulema, merchants, and professionals. These congresses proclaimed the National Pact (Misak-ı Milli), demanding Turkey's independence within Anatolia's ethnic Turkish-majority areas, rejecting partition, and opposing any form of foreign control including capitulations.

The significance of these congresses was that they created an alternative source of political authority to the Sultan's government. The Representative Committee elected at the Sivas Congress, chaired by Kemal, claimed to speak for the Turkish nation. When the Sultan's government held elections for a new parliament in late 1919 (as required by Allied authorities), nationalist candidates won overwhelming majorities. The parliament that convened in Constantinople in January 1920 endorsed the National Pact, demonstrating that nationalist resistance had popular and institutional support.

International recognition came through military success and diplomatic strategy. Kemal understood that the Allies were not united—Britain, France, Italy, and Greece had competing interests and limited willingness to fight another war in Anatolia. He negotiated with Soviet Russia, which opposed Allied imperialism and saw Turkish nationalism as compatible with anti-imperialism. The Treaty of Moscow (March 1921) established Turkish-Soviet borders and provided Turkish nationalists with weapons and gold that would be crucial for military campaigns.

But Kemal's nationalist movement was not a social revolution. It was a military-bureaucratic effort to preserve Turkey from partition while maintaining elite power structures. The movement's leadership was military officers and bureaucrats—the same class that had ruled the late Ottoman Empire. The congresses included provincial notables and landowners whose local power Kemal needed. Workers and peasants were mobilized for military service and to support the nationalist cause, but they were not offered social transformation or economic redistribution.

This continuity of elite leadership is crucial for our framework analysis. The transition from empire to Republic was led by Ottoman elites adapting to new conditions, not by subaltern classes seizing power. Kemal and his colleagues were saving Turkey, but they were also preserving their own class's dominance under new nationalist rather than imperial-Ottoman forms.

The Grand National Assembly (1920)

When Allied forces occupied Constantinople in March 1920 (responding to nationalist activity and arresting some deputies), Kemal used the crisis to establish an alternative government entirely. He called for elections to a Grand National Assembly (GNA) to convene in Ankara, away from Allied control. The GNA opened on April 23, 1920, claiming to be Turkey's legitimate government and declaring the Sultan's Constantinople government illegitimate and under foreign coercion.

The GNA's composition reveals the nationalist movement's class character. Of the 397 deputies elected to the first GNA, the largest groups were: military officers (approximately 25%), bureaucrats and officials (approximately 20%), landowners and provincial notables (approximately 20%), merchants and professionals (approximately 15%), ulema (approximately 10%), and others including peasants and workers (fewer than 10%). This was not a workers' and peasants' assembly but an elite gathering of the Ottoman Empire's military-bureaucratic-landowning class.

The GNA's program, articulated through its debates and legislation, was nationalist modernization without social revolution. It declared sovereignty resided in the nation, not the Sultan (though it initially maintained that the Sultan was under foreign duress rather than abolishing the monarchy). It committed to fighting foreign occupation and establishing an independent Turkish state. It promised land reform and social justice but took minimal concrete action on these promises during the independence struggle.

Crucially, the GNA respected private property. Proposals for major land redistribution—taking land from large estates and giving it to peasants—were rejected. The government needed provincial notables' support for the war effort and couldn't alienate them by confiscating their land. When land reform was eventually enacted in 1926, it would be limited, applying only to certain categories of land and benefiting relatively few peasants.

The GNA's approach to labor was similarly conservative. Strikes were prohibited as undermining the national struggle. Labor organizing was suppressed when it occurred. The few workers' representatives in the assembly found their proposals for workers' rights and protections ignored or rejected. The nationalist leadership saw labor as a source of manpower for the war effort, not as a class to be empowered.

For our framework, the GNA demonstrates that the nationalist revolution's leadership preserved the Ottoman elite's class character while transforming its political form. The military-bureaucratic-landowning elite that had ruled the late Ottoman Empire now ruled through the GNA. The violence monopoly had passed from the Ottoman military to the nationalist military, but it remained concentrated in military hands. Property ownership remained concentrated in elite hands. And nationalist ideology, while different from Ottoman imperial ideology, served similar functions—legitimizing elite rule, demanding popular sacrifice, and suppressing dissent in the name of national salvation.

V. THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE (1919-1922)

The Greek Campaign and Turkish Resistance

The War of Independence's main theater was the war against Greek forces occupying western Anatolia. Understanding this conflict reveals both the nationalist movement's military effectiveness and the role of violence in establishing the new regime's authority.

Greek forces landed at Izmir on May 15, 1919, backed by British encouragement and pursuing Greek nationalist dreams of recovering ancient Hellenic territories in Asia Minor (the "Megali Idea"—Great Idea). The initial landing was accompanied by violence against Turkish civilians, massacres in some districts, and ethnic cleansing as Greek forces advanced. This created Turkish refugee flows eastward and inflamed Turkish nationalism—the Greek invasion became the nationalist movement's rallying point.

The Greek army, numbering perhaps 100,000-150,000 at peak strength, advanced inland from Izmir through 1920 and early 1921. They captured cities, established occupation administration, and settled Greek refugees from Anatolia and other regions. Their advance reached within 50 miles of Ankara by summer 1921, threatening to destroy the nationalist government.

The nationalist forces, initially smaller and less well-equipped, relied on guerrilla warfare, mobile defense, and delaying actions while building strength. Kemal appointed İsmet İnönü as commander and Fevzi Çakmak as chief of staff—both experienced officers who organized resistance effectively. The First Battle of İnönü (January 1921) and Second Battle of İnönü (March-April 1921) halted Greek advances, demonstrating that nationalist forces could fight effectively.

The decisive Battle of Sakarya (August-September 1921) saw nationalist forces, numbering roughly 100,000, stop the Greek advance just 50 miles from Ankara. The battle lasted 22 days, with both sides suffering heavy casualties (perhaps 10,000-15,000 each). The Greeks withdrew to defensive lines, having failed to destroy the nationalist army or capture Ankara. This victory proved the nationalist movement could survive militarily and marked the turning point in the war.

The Great Offensive (August 1922) saw nationalist forces, now reorganized, re-equipped with Soviet weapons, and numbering over 200,000, attack Greek positions. The offensive shattered Greek defenses, and within weeks the Greek army was in full retreat. Izmir was recaptured on September 9, 1922. The retreating Greek forces and fleeing Greek civilians were pursued, and atrocities were committed on both sides—Turkish forces massacred Greeks in some areas, burned Greek villages, and drove the Greek population toward the coast.

The "Catastrophe" (as Greeks call it) saw perhaps 1 million Greeks flee Anatolia or face death as Turkish forces advanced. The fires in Izmir (September 13-17, 1922) destroyed the Greek and Armenian quarters, killing thousands. Whether Turkish forces deliberately set the fires or they resulted from chaos remains disputed, but the outcome was clear—Izmir's Christian population was eliminated, and the city became Turkish.

The military victory established several patterns crucial for the Republic. First, the army emerged as the nation's savior and guardian, giving it enormous prestige and political power. The Republic would be militarized from its founding, with the army seeing itself as protector of Kemalist principles and intervening in politics repeatedly. Second, victory was achieved through violence that included ethnic cleansing and massacres—the Republic was born in blood, and the violence used to create it would be legitimized as necessary for national survival.

Third, the war demonstrated that military force, not diplomatic negotiation or constitutional process, determined Turkey's fate. The Sultan's government had tried cooperation with Allies and signing treaties; it achieved nothing. The nationalists used military force and succeeded. This lesson—that power comes from the barrel of a gun—would mark Turkish politics throughout the Republic's history.

The Eastern Front and Armenian Question

While the Greek war drew most attention, nationalist forces also fought in eastern Anatolia against Armenian forces and briefly against French forces in the south. These campaigns had less military significance but enormous consequences for completing Anatolia's ethnic transformation.

Armenian survivors of the 1915-1917 genocide, perhaps 300,000-400,000, had fled to the Russian Caucasus. When the Treaty of Sèvres proposed an independent Armenian state in eastern Anatolia (roughly coinciding with areas where Armenians had been concentrated before genocide), Armenian forces attempted to establish control of these territories. The short-lived Armenian Republic (1918-1920) sent forces into eastern Anatolia, occupying Kars and surrounding regions.

The Turkish-Armenian War (September-December 1920) saw nationalist forces attack Armenian positions, defeat Armenian armies, and capture Kars. The Treaty of Alexandropol (December 2, 1920) forced Armenia to renounce claims to eastern Anatolia. Shortly thereafter, Soviet Russia occupied Armenia, incorporating it into the USSR. The nationalist victory ensured that no Armenian state would exist in Anatolia and that Armenian survivors could not return to their ancestral lands.

The campaign against Armenians involved massacres of Armenian populations and destruction of remaining Armenian cultural sites. Nationalist forces and Kurdish irregulars killed thousands of Armenians, completed the destruction of churches and monasteries begun during the genocide, and eliminated the last Armenian presence in eastern Anatolia. This was not incidental violence during military operations but systematic elimination of any basis for Armenian territorial claims.

For our framework, the eastern campaigns demonstrate that the nationalist movement completed the demographic transformation begun during World War I. The Armenian genocide had eliminated most Armenians; the War of Independence eliminated the survivors and ensured their properties would not be returned. The Kurdish populations who participated in

anti-Armenian violence were rewarded (until later when Kurdish nationalism itself became a threat and was suppressed). And the ethnic homogenization of Anatolia became nearly complete—what had been a multi-ethnic region became overwhelmingly Turkish Muslim.

The French presence in southern Anatolia (Cilicia) was resolved through negotiation. France, facing Arab resistance in Syria and Turkish resistance in Cilicia, decided the region wasn't worth the cost. The Franklin-Bouillon Agreement (October 1921) saw France withdraw from Cilicia in exchange for economic concessions and Turkish recognition of French control over Syria. This demonstrated Kemal's diplomatic skill—he could negotiate with European powers when military force was insufficient or unnecessary.

Mobilization and Elite-Mass Relations

The War of Independence required mobilizing Anatolia's population for military service and economic support. Understanding how this mobilization functioned reveals the relationship between nationalist leadership and ordinary people—and whether revolutionary rhetoric translated into material redistribution.

The nationalist government conscripted men for military service, requisitioned food and supplies, and demanded "donations" to support the war effort. These measures were identical in form to Ottoman wartime extraction during World War I, differing only in that they were justified by national independence rather than imperial defense. For peasants, the experience was similar—their sons were taken for military service, their crops were requisitioned, and they received promises of gratitude rather than material compensation.

Women's mobilization for the war effort has been emphasized in nationalist historiography as evidence of the revolution's progressive character. Women transported supplies, nursed wounded, and participated in resistance organizations. This participation was real and significant, but it didn't translate into women's empowerment politically or economically during or immediately after the war. Women wouldn't receive voting rights until 1930 (municipal) and 1934 (national), and even then these rights were granted from above rather than won through women's organizing.

The nationalist government promised land reform to gain peasant support. The promise was that after independence, large estates would be redistributed to landless and land-poor peasants. But when independence was won, land reform was minimal. The 1926 land reform law applied only to state lands and abandoned properties (primarily those confiscated from Greeks and Armenians), not to private estates owned by Turkish landowners. The result was that some peasants received small plots of confiscated minority land, but the fundamental structure of land ownership—large estates owned by notables, peasants as sharecroppers or wage laborers—persisted.

Labor organizing was suppressed during and after the war. The few attempts to form unions or conduct strikes were crushed, with organizers arrested and accused of being communist agents. The government's position was that class conflict was divisive during the national

struggle and that workers should accept their position until Turkey was secure. After independence, this temporary suppression became permanent—labor organizing remained tightly controlled, strikes were illegal in many sectors, and the state determined labor relations through corporatist institutions rather than allowing autonomous worker organizations.

For our framework, wartime mobilization demonstrates how elite-led national movements can extract enormous sacrifices from ordinary people while promising future compensation that never fully materializes. Peasants and workers provided the manpower and resources that won independence, but the benefits of that independence accrued primarily to the elite who already possessed land, capital, and political connections. The nationalist revolution was genuine in political and ideological terms but conservative in economic and social terms—it preserved existing property relations while transforming the state.

VI. THE TREATY OF LAUSANNE AND POPULATION EXCHANGE (1923)

Negotiating Turkish Independence

The Treaty of Lausanne, signed on July 24, 1923, after months of negotiation, represented Turkish nationalism's diplomatic triumph. It replaced the Treaty of Sèvres (which the nationalist government never accepted and which never went into effect) with terms recognizing Turkey's independence, territorial integrity, and sovereignty. Understanding Lausanne's terms reveals what the nationalist movement achieved and what it conceded.

The treaty's territorial provisions gave Turkey control over Anatolia and Eastern Thrace (including Constantinople/Istanbul). This was substantially less than the Ottoman Empire at its height but included all areas with Turkish ethnic majorities. Armenia would not exist as an independent state—its proposed territories were incorporated into Turkey and the USSR. Kurdistan would not exist—the proposed autonomous Kurdish region was abandoned, and Kurdish-majority areas remained within Turkey.

The capitulations were abolished. This ended the extraterritorial privileges that European powers had held since the 16th century and which had become instruments of economic domination in the 19th century. Turkey would have full tariff autonomy and legal jurisdiction over all people in its territory. This represented genuine sovereignty restoration, contrasting sharply with the semi-colonial status the late Ottoman Empire had endured.

The Straits (Bosphorus and Dardanelles) were demilitarized and placed under international commission, allowing free passage to all nations' ships. This limited Turkish sovereignty somewhat, but given the strategic importance of the Straits, Turkey accepted this as preferable to foreign occupation.

Financial provisions required Turkey to assume a portion of Ottoman public debt but at levels negotiated down from Allied demands. Turkey would not pay reparations or war indemnity. The Ottoman Public Debt Administration would be dissolved, ending the direct European control over Turkish finances that had existed since 1881.

The treaty said nothing about the Armenian genocide. There would be no acknowledgment, no accountability, no compensation to survivors, and no return of confiscated properties. The international community effectively accepted that the Armenian Question had been "solved" through extermination and expulsion. This silence would enable Turkish denial that persists to the present.

For our framework, Lausanne represents successful nationalist diplomacy that achieved genuine sovereignty while preserving elite interests. Abolishing capitulations protected Turkish economic sovereignty (enabling tariffs to protect domestic industries and prevent European commercial domination). The debt settlement prevented financial subordination. Territorial terms included all areas where Turkish landowners held properties. And the silence on genocide protected those who had appropriated Armenian wealth.

The comparison with Sèvres is instructive. Sèvres would have partitioned Turkey, maintained capitulations, imposed crushing debt payments, and created Armenian and Kurdish states that would have required returning confiscated properties. Lausanne gave Turkey what Sèvres would have denied: sovereignty, territorial integrity, and control over its economy. The difference was that Lausanne was negotiated after military victory, while Sèvres was imposed after defeat. Power, not justice, determined the outcome.

The Population Exchange

The Lausanne Treaty's most far-reaching provision was the compulsory population exchange between Greece and Turkey. Article 1 required that Greek Orthodox residents of Turkish territory (except Constantinople) be exchanged with Muslim residents of Greek territory (except Western Thrace). This wasn't voluntary migration—it was forced expulsion based on religion.

The numbers were enormous. Approximately 1.2 million Greek Orthodox were expelled from Turkey, while approximately 400,000 Muslims were expelled from Greece. The exchange was completed by 1924-1925, fundamentally transforming both countries' demographics. Turkey became religiously homogeneous (over 98% Muslim), while Greece similarly became more homogeneous.

The human suffering was immense. Greek Orthodox communities that had lived in Anatolia for millennia—since before the Turkish arrival—were torn from their homes. In some cases, these were descendants of the ancient Greek colonists or Byzantine populations. They spoke Greek, practiced Orthodox Christianity, and identified as Hellenes. Many had never been to Greece and knew nothing of it except that they were being expelled there.

The property confiscations were systematic and massive. Greek Orthodox residents abandoned houses, shops, farms, businesses, and communal properties (churches, schools). These properties were inventoried and distributed to Turkish Muslims, particularly to refugees from the Balkans and Caucasus who had fled during the previous decade's wars. The Muslim refugees thus received compensation (Greek properties in Turkey) while Greek Orthodox refugees from Turkey arrived in Greece impoverished.

For those who were exchanged, the experience was traumatic. Families were separated when some members had been expelled earlier and others remained. Properties that had been in families for generations were abandoned. Communities were destroyed. The expelled arrived in host countries as refugees requiring resettlement support, straining both economies.

The population exchange completed the demographic transformation that the CUP had initiated in 1913-1914 and intensified during World War I. The sequence was: Greek persecution (1913-1914) removed hundreds of thousands of Greeks; the Armenian genocide (1915-1917) eliminated most Armenians; the War of Independence (1919-1922) eliminated remaining Armenians and many more Greeks; and the population exchange (1923-1924) removed almost all remaining Greeks.

The result was that Anatolia, which in 1912 had been roughly 75-80% Muslim and 20-25% Christian (Greeks, Armenians, Assyrians), was by 1925 over 98% Muslim. The Christian commercial and professional classes were gone. Their properties had been transferred to Muslim Turks. The demographic homogeneity that Turkish nationalism required had been achieved through systematic violence and forced expulsion.

For our framework, the population exchange represents state-directed social engineering that served elite interests while causing mass suffering. The Turkish Muslim elite acquired properties, eliminating Christian economic competition. The state achieved the ethnic-religious homogeneity that made nationalist ideology more credible. And the violence and expulsion were legitimized as necessary population adjustments rather than recognized as ethnic cleansing.

The Republic's founding was thus inseparable from these population transfers and the earlier genocide. The Turkish nation-state that emerged was ethnically homogenized through violence, with elite enrichment through expropriation. This foundational violence would be denied, minimized, or justified, but it shaped the Republic's character and elite composition fundamentally.

VII. ELITE CONTINUITY: THE ANSWER TO THE CENTRAL QUESTION

Who Held Power in the Republic?

The question driving this case study is whether the Ottoman elite who controlled the three monopolies (wealth, violence, information) disappeared, were replaced, or adapted when the empire collapsed and the Turkish Republic emerged. The evidence demonstrates adaptation with selective replacement—old elite families who aligned with nationalism survived and thrived, while those who didn't were eliminated or marginalized.

The military elite provides the clearest continuity. The nationalist army's officer corps was almost entirely composed of Ottoman military officers who had served in World War I. Mustafa Kemal himself was an Ottoman general. İsmet İnönü, Fevzi Çakmak, Kazım Karabekir, Ali Fuat Cebesoy—all the key military leaders were Ottoman officers. They transitioned seamlessly from Ottoman military service to nationalist forces to the Republican military. Their training, worldview, and institutional loyalties all derived from the Ottoman military tradition.

The bureaucratic elite similarly showed strong continuity. The ministries, legal system, and administrative structures of the Republic were staffed by Ottoman bureaucrats who had served during the Tanzimat and Young Turk periods. They brought Ottoman administrative practices, adapted them to Republic needs, and maintained bureaucratic continuity. The secular legal codes (civil code, penal code) were drafted by officials trained in Ottoman law who adapted European models (particularly Swiss civil code, Italian penal code) to Turkish conditions.

The landed elite demonstrated the most direct continuity. The provincial notables (ayan) and landowners who controlled large estates in the late Ottoman period retained their land in the Republic, provided they had supported the nationalists. The 1926 land reform law, as mentioned, didn't challenge private estates. Families that had accumulated land through the 1858 Land Code's appropriations kept it. New landholdings created through distribution of confiscated minority properties went to nationalist supporters, often from families already possessing land.

Examples of elite family continuity are numerous. The Çamlıca family (merchants and landowners in Izmir) transitioned from late Ottoman commercial elite to Republican business elite. The Sabancı family (rising from peasant origins but accumulating wealth during late Ottoman and early Republican period through trade and land) would become one of Turkey's wealthiest families. The Koç family similarly parlayed late Ottoman commercial success into Republican industrial empire.

But there was also selective replacement. Families too closely associated with the Sultan's collaborationist government were marginalized. Some CUP leaders who fled in 1918 never returned or were tried and executed (the courts-martial of 1919-1920 convicted some CUP members for wartime crimes, though many avoided punishment). Greeks and Armenians, regardless of their stance on nationalism, were eliminated through genocide and expulsion, their properties appropriated by Turkish Muslims.

The intellectual and professional elite showed mixed patterns. Some late Ottoman intellectuals became Republican ideologues and educators. Others, particularly those with Islamist orientations, were marginalized as the Republic embraced secularism. New intellectuals, trained

in Republican schools and embracing Kemalism, rose to prominence. But the overall pattern was that educated, urban, professional classes maintained positions—the specific individuals changed partially, but the class character persisted.

For workers and peasants, there was no discontinuity because they had never held power. The Republican elite, like the Ottoman elite before it, excluded workers and peasants from political power except as mobilized supporters for elite-led movements. The Grand National Assembly included token worker and peasant representatives, but they were chosen by elite leaders rather than elected by their classes, and they had no real influence on policy.

The Three Monopolies in the Republic

Wealth monopoly: The distribution of wealth in the early Republic (1923-1930s) showed high concentration comparable to late Ottoman levels. Top 5-10% of population controlled roughly 60-70% of wealth (land, businesses, financial assets). This wasn't identical to late Ottoman distribution—the specific families changed as Christians were eliminated and Turkish Muslims appropriated properties—but the degree of concentration was similar.

Land ownership remained highly unequal. Large estates (çiftliks) of 100+ hectares were owned by perhaps 5-10% of rural families, who employed sharecroppers and wage laborers. Most peasants owned small plots insufficient for subsistence or were landless. The 1945 census data (earliest comprehensive data) shows approximately 70-75% of agricultural land was in holdings over 100 hectares owned by 5% of families. This pattern derived from late Ottoman land concentration and was preserved through the Republic's early decades.

Violence monopoly: The transition was seamless. The nationalist army became the Republic's military without interruption. The police and gendarmerie similarly transitioned from Ottoman to Republican institutions. The state's monopoly on organized violence was never challenged—there were no workers' militias, peasant armies, or autonomous armed groups that survived independence. Anyone who took up arms against the nationalist government was suppressed (Kurdish rebellions in 1925, 1930, 1937-1938 were crushed ruthlessly).

The military's political role was even stronger in the Republic than in the late empire. The army saw itself as guardian of Kemalist principles and the nation's savior. Officers held enormous prestige and political influence. While the Republic was civilian-led (Kemal was a political leader, not just a general), the military was the ultimate authority and would intervene repeatedly in politics through coups (1960, 1971, 1980) and threats of coups when it judged civilian government had strayed from Kemalist principles.

Information monopoly: This was contested but ultimately controlled. The ulema lost their monopoly as secular education expanded, religious schools were closed or subordinated to state control, and the Caliphate was abolished (1924). But the state maintained information control through different mechanisms. The Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet, established 1924) controlled Islamic teaching and preaching, ensuring religious authority supported the state. Secular schools taught Kemalist ideology as mandatory curriculum. Press freedom was

limited—newspapers critical of the government were censored or closed. Opposition parties were banned (1925-1930) or tightly restricted.

Kemalist ideology—Turkish nationalism, secularism, statism, populism, revolutionism, republicanism (the Six Arrows)—replaced Ottoman Islamic imperial ideology but served similar functions. It legitimized elite rule (the enlightened vanguard leading backward masses to civilization), demanded sacrifice for the nation (replacing demands for sacrifice for the Sultan/Caliph), and delegitimized opposition (critics were reactionaries, foreign agents, or traitors). The specific content changed, but the function—ideological control supporting elite power—persisted.

What Changed and What Persisted

Changed:

- Political structure: Empire → Republic, Sultan → President, appointed officials → elected parliament (though elections were controlled)
- Ideology: Ottoman imperialism/Islam → Turkish nationalism/secularism
- Territory: Multi-continental empire → Anatolian nation-state
- Demographics: Multi-ethnic/multi-religious → ethnically homogenized (through genocide and expulsion)
- Legal system: Şeriat/kanun duality → Secular European codes
- State-religion relationship: Islamic state → Secular state (though state-controlled religion)

Persisted:

- Class structure: Small elite controlling wealth, military, and state vs. large majority of subordinate workers/peasants
- Land ownership patterns: Concentrated in few hands, most peasants landless or land-poor
- Violence monopoly: State control of all organized armed force, used to suppress resistance
- Elite recruitment: Military officers, bureaucrats, landowners, professionals
- Extraction mechanisms: Peasant surplus appropriated through sharecropping, rents, taxes
- Labor relations: Workers subordinate, strikes suppressed, unions controlled
- Nationalist elite/minority dynamic: Dominant Turkish Muslims, subordinate Kurds and remaining minorities

The pattern is clear: The Ottoman elite that was flexible enough to embrace Turkish nationalism rather than Ottoman imperialism, that aligned with Kemal rather than the Sultan, that had land and local power rather than purely bureaucratic positions—this elite survived the transition and became the Republican elite. They used different rhetoric (nation instead of empire, people instead of subjects), operated through different institutions (parliament instead of Divan, secular

courts instead of şeriat courts), and justified their rule through different ideologies (Kemalism instead of Ottoman tradition). But they maintained control of wealth, violence, and information.

The transition was revolutionary in political form but conservative in economic substance. The Republic genuinely transformed Turkey's political institutions, legal system, and cultural orientation. But it preserved fundamental hierarchies—who owned productive assets, who commanded force, who controlled information. The elite adapted by changing their ideology and institutional positions while maintaining their class domination.

VIII. ASSESSMENT: THE OTTOMAN-TO-REPUBLIC TRANSITION (1299-1923)

624 Years of Elite Power

From Osman's frontier beylik in 1299 to the Republic's proclamation in 1923, a span of 624 years, the pattern is consistent: small elites controlled wealth-producing assets and used state violence to maintain that control while ideologies justified hierarchy as natural, necessary, or divinely ordained.

The specific elite fractions changed over time. The early Ottoman warriors and tribal leaders gave way to the devşirme slave-elite of the classical period. They were supplemented and eventually replaced by the ayan provincial notables of the 18th century. The Tanzimat bureaucrats and military officers modernized the elite in the 19th century. The CUP revolutionaries attempted to transform the system while preserving their class privileges. And the Kemalist nationalists created the Republic while maintaining elite domination under new forms.

But across all these transformations, the three monopolies persisted. Wealth was always concentrated in elite hands—whether timars, tax farms, land titles, commercial monopolies, or confiscated minority properties. Violence was always monopolized by the state—whether Janissaries, provincial armies, Ottoman military, or nationalist forces. Information was always controlled—whether through ulema, censorship, or Kemalist schools.

The material outcomes for ordinary people showed some variation but persistent subordination. Peasants in 1923 were probably no better off materially than peasants in 1600—they worked land they didn't own, paid most of what they produced to landlords or the state, and lived subsistence lives with high mortality and low life expectancy. Urban workers in 1923 had not existed in 1600 (there was no industrial working class), but their conditions were harsh—long hours, low wages, dangerous work, no real rights. Minorities in 1923 were reduced to tiny remnants, having been systematically eliminated through centuries of subordination followed by genocide and expulsion.

The elite in 1923, compared to 1299, controlled more advanced technology and institutions, operated in a globalized economy, and faced nationalist rather than imperial ideological frameworks. But they still controlled wealth, violence, and information. They still extracted surplus from workers and peasants. They still suppressed resistance through force. They still used ideology to justify their dominance.

The Republic's Foundation: Genocide and Expropriation

The Turkish Republic's founding cannot be separated from the genocide and expulsions that preceded it. The demographic transformation that created a Turkish Muslim majority and eliminated Christian minorities was achieved through systematic violence that killed over one million Armenians and expelled over one million Greeks. The wealth transfer that created a Turkish Muslim bourgeoisie was achieved through confiscation of properties belonging to murdered or expelled Christians.

This means the Republic was founded on and benefited from crimes against humanity. The elite who became the Republic's leaders and property owners had participated in or benefited from genocide and ethnic cleansing. The denial of these crimes—which Turkish state maintains to the present—is necessary to protect the property titles and legitimacy of the elite whose wealth derives from appropriation.

For comparative framework, this is similar to settler-colonial states (United States, Australia, Israel) where indigenous dispossession and genocide created the material foundation for state-building and elite wealth accumulation. The difference is the time frame—Turkey compressed indigenous elimination into a decade (1913-1923) rather than centuries, and the victims were ancient Christian populations rather than hunter-gatherer societies.

The Republic's reformism—women's rights, secular education, modernization, westernization—was real and significant. Turkey in 1950 was dramatically different from the Ottoman Empire of 1850 in culture, law, education, and gender relations. But these reforms didn't transform the fundamental economic structure. They modernized it, rationalized it, and perhaps made it more efficient, but they didn't redistribute wealth or empower workers and peasants to challenge elite domination.

Conclusion: Elite Adaptation, Not Transformation

The answer to our central question—did the Ottoman elite disappear, get replaced, or adapt when the empire collapsed and the Republic emerged—is definitively: **they adapted**.

The elite who controlled the empire's wealth and power in 1900 (or at least those who aligned with nationalism rather than the Sultan) became the Republic's elite by 1930. They changed their titles from ağas and pashas to businessmen and deputies. They changed their ideology from Ottoman imperialism to Turkish nationalism. They changed their institutional positions from timar-holders and tax farmers to legal property owners. But they remained the elite—controlling land, capital, state violence, and information.

The transformation was genuine in political and ideological dimensions. The Republic was not simply the empire with a new name. The political institutions, legal system, cultural orientation, and state-society relations were fundamentally transformed. But transformation in political superstructure did not transform economic base. Those who owned productive assets in 1900 (or their heirs, or those who acquired through expropriation) owned them in 1930. Those who commanded violence in 1900 (Ottoman officers) commanded it in 1930 (Republican officers). Those who controlled information in 1900 (ulema, intellectuals) were replaced by others (Kemalist educators, state-controlled religious authorities) but control persisted.

The pattern matches other cases in our framework. Like England (aristocrats becoming industrial capitalists), like Japan (Meiji oligarchs and zaibatsu adapting across regime changes), like Sweden (Wallenberg and industrial elite making concessions but retaining ownership)—Turkey demonstrated elite resilience across regime transformation. The specific mechanisms varied by national context, but the pattern was universal: elite power derives from control of productive assets and organized violence, and these can be maintained across political transformations if the elite adapts to new ideological and institutional forms.

For Turkey specifically, the adaptation involved:

1. **Embracing nationalism**: Old elite who clung to Ottoman imperialism or the Caliphate were eliminated; those who embraced Turkish nationalism survived
2. **Supporting Kemal**: Families who aligned with the nationalist movement gained or kept power; those who backed the Sultan's government lost
3. **Accepting secularization**: Ulema who couldn't adapt lost power; bureaucrats and intellectuals who embraced secularism gained
4. **Appropriating minority wealth**: Turkish Muslims who acquired Greek and Armenian properties created capital base for Republican bourgeoisie
5. **Maintaining property rights**: Land reform rhetoric satisfied peasants during independence struggle, but actual redistribution was minimal
6. **Controlling new institutions**: Republican parliament, bureaucracy, military were staffed by those from elite families or upwardly mobile officers/bureaucrats who joined the elite

The Republic's first decades (which would require Part 3 to fully document) would see continued elite adaptation—land reform remained limited until 1945-1950 and even then affected only state lands; industrialization was state-led, creating opportunities for elite to acquire industries through privatization or partnership; labor organizing was suppressed until forced by 1960s unrest; and the military intervened repeatedly to preserve the system when civilian politicians threatened elite interests.

The pattern established from 1299-1923 persisted through the Republic's development and into contemporary Turkey (which would require Part 4 to document). The specific elite families change partially with each generation, new fortunes are made and old ones lost, and political forms evolve. But the fundamental structure—small elite controlling wealth and violence, large majority subordinated, state power protecting elite interests, ideology legitimizing hierarchy—persists across all transformations.

This is the core insight: Elite power in complex societies does not depend on specific institutions (empire or republic, monarchy or democracy, religious or secular) but on control of productive assets and organized violence. As long as these monopolies are maintained, political transformations can be absorbed and adapted to. The Ottoman-to-Republic transition demonstrates this pattern perfectly—radical political transformation, genuine institutional change, dramatic ideological shifts, but fundamental continuity in class power and wealth concentration.

Part 2 Complete (Sections 1-2, ~27,500 words total covering 1876-1923)

Coverage:

- Ottoman defeat and occupation (1918-1920): Allied forces, Sultan's collaboration vs. nationalist resistance
- Mustafa Kemal's nationalist movement (1919-1922): Military-bureaucratic elite leadership, not social revolution
- War of Independence: Military victory establishing army's political power, ethnic cleansing of Greeks and Armenians
- Treaty of Lausanne (1923): Sovereignty restored, capitulations abolished, population exchange expelled 1.2 million Greeks
- Elite continuity demonstrated: Ottoman officers → Republican military; ayan landowners → Republican landowners; confiscated minority wealth → Turkish Muslim bourgeoisie
- Three monopolies persisted: Wealth concentration unchanged, violence monopoly seamless transition, information control shifted from ulema to Kemalist ideology
- **Final answer: Elite adapted, did not disappear or get replaced**

TURKEY CASE STUDY - PART 3 SECTION 1

From Ottoman Empire to Turkish Republic (1299-2025)

Single-Party Republic and the Transition to Multi-Party Democracy (1923-1960)

PROLOGUE: A LANDLORD'S CALCULATIONS

Konya Province, March 1950

Hasan Bey stood on the terrace of his estate house, surveying the fields that stretched to the horizon. His grandfather had been a minor ayan who parlayed tax farming into land ownership through the 1858 Land Code. His father had supported Mustafa Kemal's nationalist movement, serving in the Grand National Assembly and receiving additional lands from confiscated Greek properties. Hasan himself had graduated from Ankara University, spent two years in the Republican bureaucracy, and then returned to manage the family's holdings—now over 2,000 hectares worked by 140 sharecropping families.

The upcoming election consumed everyone's attention. For the first time since the Republic's founding, a real opposition party—the Democrat Party—had a chance to defeat the Republican People's Party (CHP) that had ruled since 1923. The Democrats promised economic liberalization, more freedom for religion, support for agriculture, and an end to the CHP's condescending modernization campaigns that treated Anatolian farmers like backward children needing civilized enlightenment.

Hasan had calculated his interests carefully. The CHP had been good to families like his—they'd protected property rights, suppressed labor organizing, and maintained order. The reforms—alphabet change, secular laws, women's rights—didn't threaten his position. His daughters were educated, his wife didn't wear çarşaf, and he personally embraced Kemalist modernization as compatible with being a pious Muslim.

But the CHP had also disappointed. The 1945 Land Reform Law, though ultimately limited in scope, had alarmed large landowners. The rhetoric about social justice and equitable distribution was unsettling even if implementation was minimal. And the CHP's urban intellectuals showed contempt for traditional religious practice that alienated rural populations.

The Democrats, by contrast, explicitly courted landowners. They opposed aggressive land reform. They promised agricultural credits and price supports that would benefit large

producers. They would relax restrictions on religious practice and education. And crucially, they represented the rising merchant and business class—partners for landowners like Hasan in the developing market economy.

Hasan's foreman approached, reporting that the sharecropping families were mostly planning to vote Democrat. This didn't concern Hasan—the Democrats would serve elite interests as reliably as the CHP, just with different rhetoric. Whether the government was called Republican People's Party or Democrat Party, whether the president was İnönü or Bayar, whether the ideology emphasized Kemalism or economic freedom—the fundamental structure would persist. Families like his would own the land. Workers would till it for shares that left them perpetually indebted. The state would protect property through police and courts. And whichever party governed would accommodate the landowners, merchants, and industrialists who controlled Turkey's wealth.

What mattered was adapting to the new forms. The single-party era was ending—the international climate after World War II made multi-party democracy necessary for Western alignment. But democracy would be managed democracy. The military would guard against threats to the Kemalist system. Property rights would be sacrosanct. And the elite would continue dominating through whichever party best served their interests at any given moment.

Hasan had already made donations to both major parties—hedging his bets. He cultivated relationships with Democrat Party candidates while maintaining his CHP connections. When the Democrats won (as seemed likely), he would be well-positioned. If by some chance the CHP retained power, he would be protected. This was how elite families survived—flexibility, connections, and understanding that political forms changed while economic power persisted.

Looking over his fields, Hasan reflected on the Republic's twenty-seven years. The Atatürk reforms had been genuine transformations—the alphabet, secularism, legal codes, women's rights, all real changes. But had they changed who owned the land? Had they empowered the sharecroppers? Had they redistributed wealth? No. The same families who'd held power in the late Ottoman period held it now, just under different titles and through different institutions.

The coming election would be celebrated as a triumph of democracy. And in one sense it was—genuine opposition, real choice, peaceful transfer of power. But in another sense, it was theater. The elite would remain the elite. The masses would vote, celebrate their choice, and return to working land they didn't own for wages that kept them poor. Democracy would legitimize the system rather than transforming it.

Hasan smiled slightly. His grandfather had navigated the transition from Ottoman Empire to Republic. He would navigate the transition from single-party to multi-party rule. His children would navigate whatever came next. The art of elite survival was recognizing that systems evolved while hierarchies persisted, that forms transformed while functions remained constant, and that those who owned productive assets could adapt to any political structure that left their ownership intact.

I. THE ATATÜRK ERA: REVOLUTIONARY FORMS, CONSERVATIVE SUBSTANCE (1923-1938)

The Kemalist Reforms: What Changed?

Mustafa Kemal's presidency (1923-1938) brought transformations so dramatic that Turkish nationalists call it the "Kemalist Revolution." Understanding which changes were genuinely transformative and which were surface-level adaptations is essential for tracking elite continuity.

The reforms came rapidly after the Republic's proclamation. The Caliphate was abolished (March 1924), ending the Ottoman dynasty's last claim to legitimacy and severing the official link between Turkish state and Islamic authority. Religious schools (medreses) were closed, and education was placed under a unified secular Ministry of Education. Religious courts were abolished, with all legal matters transferred to secular courts applying European-derived codes. The Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) was created to bring mosques and religious personnel under state control.

The alphabet reform (1928) replaced Arabic script with Latin alphabet. This was presented as modernization enabling easier literacy, but it also severed the population from Ottoman texts and Islamic religious materials written in Arabic script. Anyone who wanted to read the Quran would need to learn Arabic separately—Turkish could now be written in Latin letters only. This created a cultural break, making pre-Republican texts inaccessible to younger generations.

The legal reforms imported Swiss Civil Code (1926), Italian Penal Code (1926), and German Commercial Code (1926). These replaced the mixed system of şeriat and Ottoman kanun with purely secular European law. Family law particularly changed—polygamy was banned, marriage became civil contract rather than religious sacrament, women gained equal divorce rights (on paper), and inheritance was equalized between sons and daughters (contradicting Islamic law's preference for male heirs).

Women's rights reforms granted female suffrage—municipal elections (1930) and national elections (1934). Women could enter professions previously closed to them. Female education was promoted. Dress codes changed—the fez was banned for men (1925), and while veiling wasn't officially prohibited, the state actively discouraged it and excluded veiled women from official positions and universities.

The surname law (1934) required all citizens to adopt surnames (previously, most Turks used first names with patronymics or nicknames). Mustafa Kemal took the surname "Atatürk" (Father of Turks), and others followed with Turkish-language surnames rather than Arabic or Persian names that had been common under the Ottomans.

These reforms were genuine transformations of daily life, culture, and law. Turkey in 1938 was dramatically different from the Ottoman Empire of 1918 in visible, measurable ways. But several questions remain for our framework: Did these reforms redistribute wealth? Did they challenge property concentration? Did they empower workers or peasants? Did they constrain elite power?

What Didn't Change: Property and Power

The Kemalist reforms transformed Turkey's cultural and legal superstructure while leaving economic base largely intact. Understanding what wasn't reformed reveals the revolution's limits.

Land reform was promised but never implemented substantially during Atatürk's lifetime. The National Economy Congress (1923) discussed land distribution, but no action followed. Large estates remained in the hands of families who had acquired them in the late Ottoman period. The sharecropping system persisted—peasants worked land for shares (typically 50% or less of harvest) while landowners appropriated the surplus. Rural inequality was extreme and growing.

Some data from the period: A 1927 agricultural census showed that approximately 65-70% of agricultural land was controlled by roughly 5% of rural families. The majority of peasants were landless or near-landless, working as sharecroppers (ortakçı) or agricultural wage laborers. Life expectancy for rural populations was perhaps 35-40 years. Infant mortality exceeded 25%. Literacy in rural areas was under 10% for most of the period.

The promised land reform finally came with the 1945 law (after Atatürk's death), but as we'll see, it was limited in scope and application. During Atatürk's presidency, the landed elite's power was never challenged. Indeed, many CHP deputies were large landowners whose votes would be needed for any land reform—they weren't going to vote away their own estates.

Labor organizing remained suppressed. Strikes were illegal in most sectors. The few labor unions that existed operated under strict state control. Workers' wages were low, hours were long, and conditions were dangerous. The Law on the Maintenance of Order (1925-1929) gave the government sweeping powers to suppress opposition, and while ostensibly targeting religious reactionaries and Kurdish nationalists, it was also used against labor organizers and socialist activists.

Industrial development was state-led through étatism (devletçilik), one of Kemalism's Six Arrows. The state created industrial enterprises in textiles, mining, cement, and other sectors through institutions like Sümerbank (1933) and Etibank (1935). But these state enterprises didn't challenge private property—they operated alongside private firms, and many were eventually privatized. The industrial bourgeoisie that developed wasn't displaced by state enterprise but complemented by it, often partnering with or supplying state firms.

The elite composition changed somewhat but didn't transform fundamentally. Military officers, bureaucrats, and large landowners continued dominating the political system. The CHP was a

single party of elites, not a mass party. Its leadership included generals, high bureaucrats, wealthy merchants, and provincial notables. The peasants and workers who formed the vast majority of the population had no independent political representation.

The military's political power increased during this period. The army was not just the nation's defender but the guardian of Kemalist principles. Officers saw themselves as entitled to intervene in politics to prevent threats to secularism, nationalism, or the Republic's fundamental character. This military tutelage would become explicit through coups later, but it was present from the beginning—Atatürk himself was a general, most early Republican leaders had military backgrounds, and the military was the institution with real power to enforce government decisions.

Suppressing Resistance: The Violence Monopoly in Action

The Kemalist Republic used systematic violence to suppress resistance to its reforms and to maintain elite power. Understanding this violence is essential for tracking the violence monopoly's continuity from Ottoman to Republican periods.

The Sheikh Said Rebellion (1925) was a Kurdish nationalist uprising in eastern Anatolia, led by a Kurdish religious leader and supported by tribal chiefs and peasants opposed to the Republic's centralization and secularization. The rebellion briefly controlled several cities and mobilized perhaps 15,000-20,000 fighters. The government's response was overwhelming—large military forces crushed the rebellion within three months, executing Sheikh Said and 46 other leaders, and implementing harsh collective punishments on Kurdish populations.

But the suppression didn't end with military victory. The Law on the Maintenance of Order (Takrir-i Sükûn Kanunu), passed in response to the rebellion, gave the government dictatorial powers for two years (later extended). This law was used to close opposition newspapers, arrest journalists, dissolve the Progressive Republican Party (the first opposition party), and suppress any criticism of government policies. The Independence Tribunals (İstiklal Mahkemeleri), extraordinary courts with sweeping powers, conducted trials resulting in thousands of executions and deportations.

The Ararat Rebellion (1930) was another Kurdish uprising, again crushed ruthlessly. Dersim Rebellion (1937-1938) saw particularly brutal suppression—air force bombed Kurdish villages, artillery shelled populated areas, and perhaps 40,000-70,000 people were killed (estimates vary widely and remain contested). Entire regions were depopulated, survivors were forcibly relocated to western Anatolia, and Kurdish identity was denied—Kurds were declared "Mountain Turks" who had forgotten their Turkish identity.

These suppressions demonstrate several patterns. First, the Republic would not tolerate autonomous ethnic or regional power—Turkey would be centralized and unitary, with all power flowing from Ankara. Second, the violence monopoly would be used decisively against resistance—whether Kurdish nationalism, religious opposition, or any challenge to state

authority. Third, collective punishment was acceptable—entire communities were held responsible for rebellions, with violence targeting civilians as well as fighters.

Labor unrest also faced suppression. In the few instances where strikes occurred (despite prohibition), police broke them violently. Organizers were arrested and often charged with communist activity, which carried severe penalties. The small Turkish Communist Party was crushed, its leaders arrested or forced into exile. Socialist intellectuals were monitored, censored, and sometimes imprisoned.

For our framework, this violence demonstrates continuity with Ottoman patterns. The Republic, like the empire, relied on monopolized violence to suppress resistance and maintain elite power. The specific targets changed (Kurdish tribes rather than Balkan Christians, socialist workers rather than Armenian nationalists), but the function was identical—using overwhelming force to prevent challenges to the system.

The violence was legitimized through different ideology—defending the Republic and Kemalist principles rather than defending Islam and the Sultan—but the effect was the same. Populations learned that resistance would be met with disproportionate violence, and that the state's violence monopoly was absolute. This lesson shaped political behavior throughout the Republic's history, creating a climate where opposition operated within narrow boundaries or faced destruction.

II. THE İNÖNÜ ERA: CONTINUITY AND TRANSITION (1938-1950)

Succession Without Transformation

When Atatürk died on November 10, 1938, the Republic faced its first succession test. The peaceful transfer to İsmet İnönü (Atatürk's longtime colleague and prime minister) demonstrated institutional stability but also revealed the regime's character—it was rule by the military-bureaucratic elite, not popular democracy.

İnönü was elected president by the Grand National Assembly without opposition. This wasn't because he was beloved or because there were no alternatives, but because the CHP elite had determined he would succeed, and the single-party system prevented any challenge. The assembly ratified the decision the elite had already made.

İnönü's presidency (1938-1950) was marked by continuity in domestic policy and skilled navigation of World War II. The Kemalist reforms continued—secularization proceeded, state industrial enterprises expanded, education spread slowly. But the fundamental economic structure remained unchanged. Land ownership stayed concentrated, labor remained

suppressed, and the CHP remained a party of elites governing without meaningful popular input.

World War II tested Turkey's position. İnönü maintained neutrality despite enormous pressure from both Axis and Allies. Germany had been Turkey's main trading partner and arms supplier in the 1930s, but Turkey also feared Soviet expansion and needed British support. The balancing act succeeded—Turkey didn't enter the war until February 1945 (a largely symbolic declaration against Germany when its defeat was certain), avoided invasion, and emerged with its territory intact.

But the war imposed severe economic hardship. Trade collapsed, creating shortages of imports. The government implemented a wartime economy with rationing, price controls, and agricultural requisitions. Inflation soared. The Varlık Vergisi (Wealth Tax, 1942) was ostensibly a wartime emergency tax on wealth, but it targeted minorities disproportionately—Jews, Greeks, and Armenians faced confiscatory tax rates while Muslim Turks paid far less. Those who couldn't pay were sent to labor camps. The tax was both fiscal policy and ethnic discrimination, completing the wealth transfer from remaining Christians to Muslim Turks that genocide and population exchanges had begun.

The wartime economy created new fortunes through black markets, government contracts, and speculation. Some industrialists made enormous profits selling to both government and black markets. Agricultural producers benefited from high prices (especially large landowners who had surplus to sell), while urban workers and peasants with only subsistence production suffered from shortages and inflation.

For our framework, the İnönü period demonstrates elite continuity across leadership change. The same class governed—military officers, bureaucrats, large landowners, and emerging industrialists. The same policies continued—protecting property, suppressing labor, maintaining centralization, using violence against resistance. The wartime emergency accelerated wealth concentration through black markets and discriminatory taxation, enriching Turkish Muslim elites at minorities' expense.

The Turn Toward Multi-Party Democracy

By 1945, international and domestic pressures made single-party rule increasingly untenable. Understanding why Turkey transitioned to multi-party democracy reveals both genuine political change and elite adaptation to new circumstances.

International pressure came from the West. The United States and Britain, having just defeated fascism, promoted democracy as the alternative to Soviet communism. Turkey needed Western alliance against Soviet pressure (Stalin demanded territorial concessions and base rights in the Straits). But seeking Western support while maintaining single-party dictatorship created contradiction—how could Turkey join the democratic West while banning opposition parties?

Domestic pressure came from growing discontent. The wartime economy had caused widespread suffering. Peasants resented requisitions and low prices. Urban workers faced shortages and inflation. Intellectuals and professionals wanted more freedom. And importantly, some elites—particularly merchants, businessmen, and medium-sized landowners—felt the CHP's étatist policies favored bureaucrats and large industrialists while restricting commercial freedom.

The CHP leadership, recognizing these pressures, allowed formation of opposition parties. The National Development Party (1945) was the first, but it was quickly suppressed. The Democrat Party (DP), formed in January 1946 by four CHP deputies who had broken away, became the significant opposition. Its founders—Celal Bayar, Adnan Menderes, Refik Koraltan, Fuat Köprülü—were themselves elite figures, not radical reformers. Bayar had been prime minister, Menderes was a wealthy landowner, and others had CHP backgrounds.

The 1946 elections, held hastily (probably to prevent DP from organizing fully), were neither free nor fair. Open balloting combined with secret counting enabled massive fraud. The CHP claimed 85% of votes, but observers noted irregularities throughout. Still, the DP won 61 seats out of 465, establishing itself as viable opposition.

The period 1946-1950 saw gradual political opening. Press censorship eased somewhat. Opposition newspapers launched (though still subject to harassment). The DP organized throughout the country, building networks and articulating alternatives to CHP policies. The CHP itself liberalized modestly—the Land Reform Law (1945), discussed below, was partly response to political pressure.

But the opening had limits. The military remained guardian of the system. The CHP never doubted it would remain in power—opposition was tolerated as pressure valve and to satisfy Western allies, not because the elite genuinely accepted the possibility of losing power. When the 1950 election approached, most CHP leaders expected victory. They were shocked by the result.

For our framework, the transition to multi-party democracy represents elite adaptation to new international context rather than transformation from below. The opposition DP was founded by elites, represented elite factions (commercial and agricultural capital vs. bureaucratic capital), and sought policy changes within capitalism rather than challenging property relations. Workers and peasants weren't organizing independently—they were choosing between elite-led parties. Democracy emerged not from popular pressure strong enough to force elite concessions but from elite decision that controlled democracy served their interests better than single-party rule in the new postwar context.

III. THE 1945 LAND REFORM LAW: PROMISE AND BETRAYAL

The Law's Provisions and Limitations

The Land Reform Law, passed by the CHP government on June 11, 1945, has been described by some historians as major social reform and by others as cynical theater. Understanding its actual implementation reveals elite power's resilience.

The law's stated goals were redistributing land to landless and land-poor peasants, increasing agricultural productivity, and reducing rural inequality. It authorized government to expropriate land holdings above certain sizes (varying by region and land quality, but roughly 200-500 hectares), with compensation to former owners, and redistribute to peasants in plots of 20-50 hectares.

But crucially, the law applied only to state-owned lands, abandoned properties, and land obtained through "illegal" means. Private estates legally owned were largely exempt unless holdings greatly exceeded regional maximums. And even for land subject to expropriation, compensation was required at market rates, meaning the program would be expensive for the state.

Implementation was minimal. Between 1945-1950 (when the CHP lost power), only about 1,600,000 hectares were distributed to approximately 60,000 families. This sounds substantial until compared to total agricultural land (roughly 15-20 million hectares) and landless rural families (several million). The redistribution touched perhaps 5-10% of those who needed land.

Most redistributed land came from state lands in marginal areas, not from expropriation of large private estates. The largest private landowners were barely affected. In fact, some manipulated the law to their advantage—they sold marginal land to the state at inflated compensation prices, keeping their best land, then purchased new land cheaply from small holders who couldn't afford to farm without credit.

The law's failure wasn't accidental. The CHP government faced opposition from large landowners, including CHP deputies who owned estates. When implementation began threatening significant holdings, landowners mobilized politically, challenged expropriations in courts, and pressured government to limit enforcement. The bureaucracy implementing the law lacked resources, personnel, and political will to challenge powerful local notables.

Moreover, receiving land didn't guarantee peasant independence. The distributed plots were often small, the land was marginal, no credit was provided for equipment or inputs, and technical support was minimal. Many recipient families couldn't make the farms viable and ended up selling to larger landowners or falling into debt. The land reform thus partially failed even for those who received land.

The Democrat Party's Reversal

When the Democrat Party won the 1950 election and took power, one of its first acts was effectively ending land reform. The DP government suspended further expropriations, returned

some expropriated land to original owners, and made clear that private property was sacrosanct. This was consistent with the DP's ideology favoring private enterprise and free markets, but it also reflected the party's base—landowners, merchants, and commercial farmers opposed to expropriation.

The DP's agricultural policy focused on mechanization, agricultural credits, and price supports rather than redistribution. This benefited large landowners who could afford tractors and inputs, access credit, and produce surplus for markets. Small holders and landless peasants received minimal benefit. Sharecropping persisted, though gradually declining as mechanization reduced labor demand.

Agricultural production did increase substantially in the 1950s—partly from mechanization, partly from bringing new land under cultivation, and partly from favorable weather. But the benefits concentrated among large producers. Rural inequality increased rather than decreased. And mechanization displaced labor, causing massive rural-to-urban migration that would transform Turkey's demographic structure.

For our framework, the land reform's failure demonstrates elite power's resilience through democratic transition. The CHP, despite single-party rule, couldn't implement meaningful land reform against landowner resistance. The DP, elected partly on promises to help farmers, protected large landowners' interests rather than redistributing wealth. Both parties, regardless of rhetoric, preserved the fundamental structure—concentrated land ownership, peasant subordination, elite control of rural surplus.

The pattern matches other cases in our framework. Agrarian reform rhetoric is common, but actual redistribution that challenges elite property is rare. When it occurs, it's usually under extraordinary circumstances (war, revolution, foreign occupation imposing reform) rather than through normal democratic process. Turkey's experience confirms this—elite-controlled democracy won't redistribute elite-owned wealth even when inequality is extreme and majority would benefit from redistribution.

IV. THE DEMOCRAT PARTY ERA: ECONOMIC LIBERALISM WITHOUT SOCIAL JUSTICE (1950-1960)

The 1950 Election: Democratic Transition, Elite Continuity

The May 14, 1950 election was Turkey's first genuinely competitive election with secret ballot and public counting. The result shocked the CHP establishment—the Democrat Party won 408 seats vs. CHP's 69 in the 487-seat assembly. Celal Bayar became president, Adnan Menderes became prime minister, and Turkey experienced its first peaceful transfer of power between parties.

This was genuine democracy—the opposition won through voters' choice, the CHP accepted defeat and transferred power, and no violence occurred. Turkish democracy appeared consolidated. But examining the DP's composition, policies, and governance reveals continuity in elite power beneath democratic forms.

The DP leadership and deputies were predominantly from elite backgrounds. Large landowners, wealthy merchants, professionals, and provincial notables dominated. Menderes himself owned extensive estates. The cabinet included businessmen, lawyers, and former bureaucrats. Workers and peasants were absent from leadership. The DP was an elite party that mobilized popular support through appeals to religious sentiment, economic freedom, and resentment of CHP's condescension, but it wasn't a mass party threatening elite interests.

The DP's voter base was diverse—small farmers who resented CHP requisitions, urban merchants opposed to étatism, religious conservatives angry at secularism's excesses, provincial populations tired of CHP's urban-elite modernization campaigns, and some workers hoping for economic improvement. But this broad coalition didn't organize autonomously—the DP organized it from above, using patronage, religious appeals, and economic promises.

Economic Policies: Who Benefited?

The DP's economic policies prioritized growth over redistribution, agricultural development over land reform, and private enterprise over state control. Understanding who benefited reveals the class character of DP governance.

Agricultural policies included mechanization programs, agricultural credit expansion, and price supports. The state provided subsidies for tractor purchases, established agricultural banks lending to farmers, and guaranteed minimum prices for major crops. These policies increased production substantially—wheat production nearly doubled 1950-1960, cotton and tobacco production increased similarly.

But benefits concentrated among large and medium landowners who could access credit, afford machinery, and produce surplus for markets. Small holders with only subsistence production gained little. Landless peasants faced displacement as mechanization reduced labor demand. The sharecropping system declined not because peasants gained land but because landowners mechanized and switched to wage labor or direct cultivation.

The DP also brought new land under cultivation, distributing state lands (not expropriated private estates) in eastern and southeastern regions. But much of this land went to supporters and local notables rather than landless peasants. The land distribution became patronage tool rather than social reform.

Infrastructure development—roads, dams, power plants—was substantial. The DP built highways connecting provinces to cities, enabling agricultural goods to reach urban markets and manufactured goods to reach rural areas. Dams provided irrigation and electricity. These projects were genuine development, improving productivity and living standards for some.

But infrastructure also served elite interests. Roads benefited large producers shipping crops to market more than peasants with only subsistence. Power plants supplied industries owned by elites. Construction contracts enriched connected businesses. And the development was financed through foreign borrowing, creating debt dependencies that would constrain Turkey for decades.

Industrial policy shifted from étatism toward private enterprise. The DP encouraged private industrialists through tax incentives, import protections, and favorable credit. Some state enterprises were privatized, transferred to private owners at bargain prices. Foreign capital was invited, with American companies establishing operations in Turkey.

This created an emerging industrial bourgeoisie—families like Koç and Sabancı who would become Turkey's wealthiest. But they didn't emerge through competitive capitalism—they emerged through state support, protected markets, privileged credit access, and connections to DP government. The pattern of state-created rather than market-created capitalists continued from the CHP to DP era.

Labor conditions improved modestly—real wages increased somewhat during 1950s growth. But labor organizing remained controlled. Strikes were illegal in essential sectors. Unions operated under state supervision. When workers attempted independent organizing, they faced suppression. The DP, like the CHP, treated labor as resource to be exploited rather than class to be empowered.

For our framework, the DP era demonstrates that democratic alternation between parties didn't challenge elite power when both parties represented elite interests. The CHP emphasized bureaucratic and state-industrial elite interests. The DP emphasized commercial, agricultural, and private-industrial elite interests. But both protected property, suppressed labor, and concentrated wealth. Democratic competition occurred within elite consensus that capitalism and class hierarchy were non-negotiable.

Wealth Concentration in the 1950s

Data on wealth distribution in 1950s Turkey is limited, but available evidence suggests increasing concentration. Several patterns are clear:

Land ownership concentration continued. The 1952 agricultural census showed approximately 60-65% of agricultural families owned no land or insufficient land for subsistence. Large estates (over 100 hectares) comprised roughly 70-75% of total agricultural land owned by less than 5% of families. This was comparable to late Ottoman and early Republican levels—land reform's failure meant the fundamental structure persisted.

Urban wealth concentrated among industrialists, merchants, and property owners. The emerging industrial elite—Koç Holding, Sabancı Group, and others—controlled vast business empires spanning manufacturing, trade, finance, and real estate. These weren't self-made

entrepreneurs but families who leveraged connections, state support, and privileged access to capital.

Income inequality was extreme. Estimates suggest the top 10% of population captured roughly 40-45% of total income in the 1950s, while the bottom 40% received less than 15%. This was comparable to or more unequal than late Ottoman levels—the Republican transformation hadn't reduced economic inequality despite political democracy.

Wealth concentration by region was also stark. Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir accounted for perhaps 40-50% of industrial production and commercial activity despite containing only 15-20% of population. The coastal regions (Aegean, Marmara) were substantially wealthier than interior Anatolia and eastern regions. This geographic inequality reflected Ottoman-era patterns where coastal trading cities prospered while interior agricultural regions remained poor.

For comparative context, Turkey's inequality in the 1950s was higher than Western European democracies (where postwar social democracy had created more egalitarian distributions) but comparable to Latin American countries with similar histories of concentrated land ownership and state-supported industrialization. The pattern suggests that political form (empire vs. republic, single-party vs. multi-party) mattered less for inequality than who owned productive assets.

Political Authoritarianism: Democracy's Limits

As the DP's tenure continued, its governance became increasingly authoritarian. This demonstrates that electoral democracy doesn't guarantee liberal rights when ruling elites feel threatened.

The DP won the 1954 election with even larger margins (505 seats vs. CHP's 31), partly through genuine popularity but also through electoral manipulation and using state resources for campaigning. The 1957 election saw DP majorities reduced (424 vs. 178), indicating growing opposition, but also saw increased allegations of fraud.

As opposition intensified, the DP government cracked down. Opposition newspapers were closed or faced harassment. Journalists were prosecuted. The CHP was banned from holding rallies in some regions. University professors critical of government were dismissed. In 1960, the government established an investigative committee to examine opposition activities with powers to shut down newspapers and arrest critics—an obvious attack on press freedom.

The DP also relaxed secularism, restoring religion to public life in ways that alarmed Kemalists. Arabic call to prayer was permitted (Atatürk had mandated Turkish translation). Religious education was expanded in schools. Quran courses were allowed. Funds were allocated for mosque construction and imam training. These were popular with DP's religious conservative base but were seen by military and CHP secularists as threatening the Republic's fundamental character.

Economic problems intensified by late 1950s. The DP's growth strategy relied on foreign borrowing, deficit spending, and agricultural expansion. By 1958-1959, inflation was high, foreign debt was mounting, foreign exchange reserves were depleted, and growth was stalling. The government implemented austerity (under IMF pressure), but this alienated supporters facing hardship.

Political crisis came to a head in 1960. University students and professors protested authoritarian measures. The military, increasingly alarmed by political instability, economic crisis, and what they saw as threats to Kemalism, prepared to intervene. On May 27, 1960, the military coup occurred—bloodless, swift, and seemingly supported by significant urban populations.

For our framework, the DP period demonstrates that democratic elections don't prevent elite authoritarianism when elite feel threatened. The DP, elected democratically, became increasingly authoritarian as opposition intensified and economic problems mounted. When facing challenges, they restricted rights, harassed opposition, and manipulated elections—behavior similar to single-party CHP despite democratic mandate.

The pattern suggests democratic forms are compatible with elite authoritarianism when elites control all major parties, command violence monopoly, and can manipulate institutions. Turkey had elections, opposition parties, and peaceful transfer between parties, but workers and peasants still lacked autonomous organization, wealth remained concentrated, and when democratic process threatened elite interests (through economic crisis enabling opposition mobilization), the military intervened to restore order.

V. THE 1960 COUP: MILITARY AS GUARDIAN (1960-1961)

The Coup's Execution and Justification

The May 27, 1960 coup was Turkey's first successful military intervention (there had been failed coup attempts earlier). Understanding its execution and justification reveals the military's political role and elite coordination mechanisms.

The coup was led by mid-ranking officers organized as the National Unity Committee (Milli Birlik Komitesi), though senior commanders either supported or acquiesced. In early morning hours of May 27, military units occupied key government buildings, radio stations, and airports in Ankara and Istanbul. President Bayar, Prime Minister Menderes, and DP ministers were arrested without resistance. The military announced it had intervened to save democracy and restore Kemalist principles.

The justification was that the DP government had become authoritarian, threatening press freedom and opposition rights. It had violated secularism through excessive religiosity. It had caused economic crisis through mismanagement. And it had polarized society, making normal

democratic process impossible. The military claimed it would restore order, write a new constitution, hold elections, and return to barracks—a temporary intervention to save democracy, not permanent military rule.

This justification combined genuine concerns with self-serving rationalizations. The DP had indeed become authoritarian—the 1960 investigative committee was flagrantly anti-democratic. Economic crisis was real—inflation, debt, stagnation all were problems. But the military's real concern was that DP's religious appeals and populist politics threatened the Kemalist-secularist elite's power. The military was intervening to preserve a particular vision of Turkey against democratically-elected government that majority had voted for.

The coup had support from urban middle classes, intellectuals, students, and CHP supporters who welcomed DP's overthrow. But it was opposed by DP's large electoral base—small farmers, religious conservatives, provincial populations. The military could execute the coup because it monopolized violence—the DP government had no armed forces to resist, and popular opposition couldn't challenge military power.

The Trials and Constitution

The military established extraordinary courts to try DP leaders for violations of the constitution and various other charges. The trials were show trials—the verdicts were predetermined. Menderes, two ministers, and several DP officials were sentenced to death. Menderes was executed in September 1961, becoming a martyr for his supporters and controversial figure for secular elites.

The execution was politically significant. It demonstrated that elected politicians who threatened military-secularist elite interests faced severe consequences. It established that the military would enforce limits on civilian politics. And it created lasting resentment among DP supporters, who saw Menderes as democratically elected leader murdered by military coup—a view that persists in Turkish conservative politics to present.

The military regime drafted a new constitution (1961), which was approved by referendum. The constitution was more liberal than the 1924 constitution in many respects—it established Constitutional Court, expanded rights protections, created bicameral legislature, and included social rights provisions. But crucially, it also institutionalized military political role through the National Security Council (Milli Güvenlik Kurulu), giving military official voice in government.

The 1961 Constitution was paradox—democratic and liberal in text but created under military dictatorship and institutionalizing military oversight. It reflected Kemalist elite's vision that democracy needed constraints to prevent "democratic excesses" threatening secularism, unity, or modernization. The military would be democracy's guardian, intervening when civilian governments strayed too far from acceptable boundaries.

Elections were held in October 1961 under the new constitution. The military allowed political activity to resume, but the DP was banned. Its successor parties—Justice Party (AP) and New

Turkey Party (YTP)—split the DP's base. The CHP won plurality but not majority. Coalition governments would characterize the 1960s, with instability and frequent cabinet changes.

For our framework, the 1960 coup demonstrates the military's role as elite coordination mechanism. When civilian politics threatened elite interests—specifically the Kemalist-secularist elite's vision of Turkey—the military intervened to restore order. Democracy was subordinate to this deeper commitment to a particular socio-political vision defended by violence monopoly holders.

The pattern established in 1960 would repeat—military coups in 1971 and 1980, and "post-modern coup" in 1997. Each intervention claimed to defend democracy while overthrowing elected governments. Each demonstrated that Turkey's democracy was limited, constrained by military as final arbiter. And each showed that elite holding violence monopoly would use it when civilian politics exceeded acceptable boundaries.

Continuity Beneath Disruption

Despite the coup's drama, fundamental continuities persisted. The military didn't redistribute wealth, challenge property rights, or empower workers and peasants. It didn't break large estates, nationalize industries, or implement socialist policies. It intervened to preserve Kemalist capitalism against what it saw as DP's religious populism and authoritarianism, not to transform the economic base.

The 1961 Constitution's social rights provisions were largely symbolic—it declared rights to work, to form unions, to strike, but implementation was limited and these rights remained subordinate to property rights and national interest as defined by elites. Land reform wasn't revived. Labor organizing remained controlled. Wealth concentration persisted.

The elite composition didn't transform. Military officers, bureaucrats, industrialists, landowners, and professionals continued dominating. The DP leaders were removed (executed, exiled, or banned from politics), but the class they represented—commercial bourgeoisie, large farmers, provincial notables—remained and soon reorganized through successor parties like the Justice Party.

For tracking elite continuity, the 1960 coup represents elite faction conflict rather than elite-mass transformation. The military-bureaucratic-secularist elite used violence to discipline the commercial-agricultural-religious elite faction that had governed through DP. But both factions agreed on capitalism, private property, labor suppression, and class hierarchy. Their conflict was over boundaries of religiosity, style of governance, and specific policies, not over whether elite should dominate society.

The coup thus maintained the pattern we've tracked from Ottoman Empire through Republican transition—elite adaptation through institutional transformation while preserving control of wealth, violence, and information. Democracy was real but constrained. Violence monopoly

remained with military. Wealth remained concentrated. And ideology (Kemalism defended by military) continued legitimizing elite power while preventing alternatives.

Coverage:

- Atatürk era (1923-1938): Revolutionary cultural/legal reforms, but property relations unchanged, land reform promised but not delivered, violence suppressed Kurdish resistance
- İnönü era (1938-1950): Wartime economy accelerated wealth concentration, Varlık Vergisi targeted minorities, transition to multi-party democracy as elite adaptation
- 1945 Land Reform Law: Minimal implementation, large estates protected, promise betrayed when DP took power
- Democrat Party era (1950-1960): Electoral democracy but elite continuity, agricultural mechanization benefited large landowners, wealth concentration increased, growing authoritarianism
- 1960 coup: Military as elite guardian, Menderes executed, new constitution institutionalized military oversight, fundamental economic structure unchanged

Next Section (Part 3 Section 2) Will Cover:

- 1960s instability and coalition governments
- 1971 "coup by memorandum"
- 1970s left-right violence and economic crisis
- 1980 coup and massive repression
- Assessment of 1923-1980 period: Did any transformation break elite power?

TURKEY CASE STUDY - PART 3 SECTION 2

From Ottoman Empire to Turkish Republic (1299-2025)

Political Crisis, Violence, and Military Repression (1960-1980)

VI. THE UNSTABLE 1960s: COALITION GOVERNMENTS AND RISING LEFT (1961-1971)

Political Fragmentation and Elite Competition

The 1961 elections produced fragmentation that would characterize the entire decade. The 1961 Constitution's proportional representation system enabled smaller parties to gain seats, preventing single-party majorities and requiring coalition governments. Understanding this instability reveals elite faction competition and the limits of Turkish democracy.

The Republican People's Party (CHP) won plurality with 36.7% of votes and 173 seats in the 450-seat assembly. The Justice Party (AP), successor to banned Democrat Party and representing similar constituencies, won 34.8% and 158 seats. Two smaller DP successor parties, New Turkey Party (YTP) and Republican Peasant Nation Party (CKMP), won 65 seats combined. The remaining seats went to independents and minor parties.

The fragmentation reflected both institutional design (proportional representation) and genuine social divisions. The CHP represented urban middle classes, bureaucrats, intellectuals, and secularists. The AP represented merchants, large landowners, commercial farmers, and religious conservatives. The smaller parties represented regional interests, specific ideological factions, or personality-based followings.

Coalition governments were unstable and short-lived. Between 1961-1965, Turkey had four different governments as coalitions formed, collapsed, and reformed. Policy continuity was difficult. Reforms stalled. Economic management suffered. But beneath the surface instability, fundamental patterns persisted—property rights were protected, labor organizing was controlled, and the military maintained oversight through the National Security Council.

The 1965 election gave the Justice Party clear majority (52.9%, 240 seats). Süleyman Demirel became prime minister, a position he would hold repeatedly over the next three decades. Demirel exemplified the Turkish political elite—trained as engineer, worked in American-funded development projects, rose through AP ranks, represented commercial-agricultural interests

while maintaining military connections. He was pragmatic rather than ideological, willing to make deals, and skilled at navigating elite factions.

The AP government (1965-1971) pursued pro-business policies similar to the DP era. Economic growth was strong in mid-1960s, benefiting industrialists and large farmers. But inequality increased, and urban workers and rural poor saw minimal improvement. This created space for left-wing politics to emerge.

The Workers Party of Turkey and Labor Organizing

The 1960s saw the first significant left-wing political organizing in Republican Turkey's history. The Workers Party of Turkey (Türkiye İşçi Partisi, TİP), founded in 1961, represented socialist politics openly for the first time. Understanding TİP's rise and suppression reveals how elite responded to challenges from below.

TİP was founded by trade union leaders and leftist intellectuals who saw opportunity in the 1961 Constitution's expanded rights. The party advocated socialist policies—nationalization of major industries, comprehensive land reform, workers' control, expanded social services, and anti-imperialism (opposing American bases and NATO membership). Its program explicitly challenged capitalist property relations rather than seeking accommodation within them.

TİP won 3% of votes in 1965 elections, gaining 15 seats. This was modest but significant—a socialist party had won parliamentary representation. TİP deputies included trade unionists, professors, and intellectuals who used parliament to advocate for workers and peasants. Mehmet Ali Aybar, TİP's leader, was eloquent socialist intellectual who articulated systematic critique of Turkish capitalism.

More importantly, TİP represented broader labor mobilization. Trade union membership grew from roughly 300,000 in early 1960s to over 1 million by end of decade. Strike activity increased dramatically—from handful of strikes annually in 1950s to hundreds in late 1960s. Workers in textile factories, automotive plants, ports, and mines organized unions, conducted strikes, and demanded better wages and conditions.

The 1963 strike wave particularly alarmed elites. Major strikes in textile and mining sectors involved tens of thousands of workers and lasted weeks. The strikes were largely successful—workers won wage increases and better conditions. But success alarmed both AP government and military. If workers could paralyze production through strikes, they had power that threatened elite control.

Student movements also emerged in the 1960s, influenced by global 1968 protests. University students occupied campuses, demanded educational reforms, protested American imperialism, and allied with labor movements. The student left was radical—some embraced Marxism-Leninism, others Maoism, and some would eventually turn to armed struggle. But in the 1960s, student movements were primarily political and cultural rather than violent.

For our framework, the 1960s left emergence represented the first sustained challenge to elite power from below since the Republic's founding. Workers organizing autonomously, articulating class interests, and using strikes to extract concessions—this was precisely what the Ottoman and Republican elite had suppressed for centuries. The elite response would be decisive.

The 1971 "Coup by Memorandum"

On March 12, 1971, the Turkish military's top commanders delivered an ultimatum to Prime Minister Demirel: resign, allow technocratic government to implement reforms and restore order, or face direct military intervention. Demirel resigned, and a government of technocrats supported by military took power. This "coup by memorandum" was softer than 1960's direct seizure but equally effective at asserting military dominance.

The military's justification combined genuine and manufactured concerns. Turkey faced serious economic problems—inflation, trade deficits, unemployment. Left-right political violence was increasing (discussed below). And most crucially from military perspective, leftist movements threatened to transform Turkey toward socialism. The military claimed intervention was necessary to prevent chaos and protect the state.

But the real target was the left. The post-1971 period saw systematic repression of labor, socialist parties, student movements, and anyone associated with leftist politics. The TİP was banned and its leaders arrested. Dozens of leftist intellectuals, professors, journalists, and activists were tried in military courts on charges of communist activity. Torture was systematic—thousands of leftists were detained, tortured, and imprisoned.

Labor unions were purged of leftist leadership. Strike activity was suppressed—strikes were declared illegal in many sectors, and workers who struck faced arrest. The confederation of revolutionary trade unions (DİSK, founded 1967 as leftist alternative to state-controlled Türk-İş) was particularly targeted. Its leaders were arrested, member unions were harassed, and its ability to organize was severely constrained.

Universities were purged. Professors with leftist views were fired. Students involved in protests were expelled or arrested. The military saw universities as breeding grounds for subversion and moved decisively to eliminate leftist influence. The academic freedom that the 1961 Constitution had promised was revealed as conditional—acceptable only when it didn't challenge elite interests.

The repression was brutal but effective. By 1973, when civilian politics resumed and elections were held, the left had been decimated. TİP never recovered—it won no seats in 1973 and eventually dissolved. Labor organizing was weakened, though not eliminated. Student movements were driven underground or into armed struggle. The message was clear: organizing to challenge elite power would be met with overwhelming state violence.

For our framework, the 1971 intervention demonstrates elite use of violence monopoly when threatened by mobilized labor and left politics. The military intervened not to protect democracy

(which was functioning) but to crush movements that threatened capitalist property relations. The pattern is identical to Ottoman suppressions of peasant revolts or early Republican crushing of Kurdish rebellions—the specific targets change (leftists rather than ethnic nationalists or religious movements), but the function is identical.

Crucially, the repression had support from industrial and landed elites who feared labor organizing and land reform demands. The military acted as enforcer for elite class interests, using violence monopoly to suppress challenges from below. This coordination between violence holders (military) and wealth holders (industrialists, landowners) demonstrates how elite fractions cooperate when fundamental interests are threatened, despite competing in normal politics.

VII. THE 1970s: VIOLENCE, CRISIS, AND BREAKDOWN (1971-1980)

Left-Right Political Violence

The 1970s saw escalating political violence between left and right militant groups that would be used to justify the 1980 coup. Understanding this violence's sources and character reveals both genuine social conflict and elite manipulation.

The left fragmented after 1971 repression. Some concluded peaceful organizing was impossible and turned to armed struggle. Revolutionary organizations emerged—Dev-Genç (Revolutionary Youth), THKO (Turkish People's Liberation Army), THKP-C (Turkish People's Liberation Party-Front), and later Dev-Sol (Revolutionary Left). These groups conducted bank robberies, kidnappings, and attacks on police and military targets. They saw themselves as revolutionary vanguard preparing for armed overthrow of the capitalist state.

The most famous incident was the March 1971 kidnapping and killing of Israeli consul general by THKP-C, led by Mahir Çayan. The group demanded release of imprisoned leftists and publicized revolutionary manifesto. When demands weren't met, they killed hostages and were themselves killed by military in armed confrontation. Çayan became martyr for radical left, demonstrating both revolutionary commitment and futility of armed struggle against state with overwhelming violence capacity.

But left violence, while dramatic, was relatively limited. Leftist groups numbered perhaps a few thousand militants at peak, conducted dozens of operations annually, and killed perhaps a few hundred people total across the decade. They were serious threat to individuals they targeted but never approached threatening state power militarily. The Turkish military could crush any armed leftist movement whenever it chose.

The right-wing violence was larger in scale and more deadly, yet received less state repression. The Grey Wolves (Bozkurtlar), militant wing of the Nationalist Action Party (MHP) led by Alparslan Türkeş, numbered tens of thousands of members. They received training, weapons, and protection from elements within the state security apparatus who saw them as useful anti-communist force.

Grey Wolves attacked leftists, trade unionists, progressive intellectuals, and Alevis (heterodox Muslim minority associated with left). They conducted massacres—Maraş (1978, over 100 Alevis killed), Çorum (1980, dozens killed), and numerous smaller attacks. They assassinated progressive politicians, journalists, and professors. They attacked labor union offices and leftist bookstores. Their violence was systematic, organized, and explicitly fascist in ideology.

Total deaths from political violence in the 1970s are estimated at 5,000-6,000 (estimates vary). Right-wing violence accounted for perhaps 60-70% of deaths, left-wing violence perhaps 25-30%, with security forces responsible for the remainder. But media and state discourse presented left as primary threat, justifying repression while tolerating or enabling right violence.

For our framework, this violence pattern reveals state complicity in creating "chaos" that would justify military intervention. The state could have suppressed right-wing violence—it had overwhelming force capacity and many Grey Wolves attacks were known to police in advance. But suppressing the right would eliminate a useful anti-communist force. Instead, the state tolerated right violence while crushing left, creating appearance of left-right balance that justified "neutral" military intervention to restore order.

The violence also prevented labor organizing and left politics from developing peacefully. Workers who might join unions feared Grey Wolves attacks. Intellectuals who might write progressive critiques faced assassination. The violence created climate where challenging elite power was literally life-threatening, suppressing dissent more effectively than legal repression alone could.

Economic Crisis and Stagflation

The 1970s brought severe economic crisis that intersected with political violence to create ungovernable conditions. Understanding the economic crisis reveals both global forces and Turkish elite choices that created conditions for military intervention.

The 1973 oil crisis hit Turkey hard. As oil importer dependent on Middle East oil, Turkey faced huge price increases that caused inflation to spike. The 1973-1974 period saw inflation rise from roughly 15% to over 25% annually. Economic growth slowed, creating stagflation—inflation plus stagnation, the worst of both worlds.

The Cyprus conflict (1974) compounded problems. Turkey invaded Cyprus in response to Greek Cypriot coup, occupying northern third of the island. The invasion was popular domestically and achieved strategic objectives, but it brought American arms embargo, international isolation,

and military expenditure Turkey could ill afford. The embargo particularly hurt military modernization efforts and created resentment toward Western allies.

Import substitution industrialization (ISI), the development model Turkey had followed since the 1930s, was exhausting its potential. ISI protected domestic industries from foreign competition through tariffs and import restrictions, enabling industrialization but creating inefficiencies. By the 1970s, Turkish industry couldn't compete internationally, and the protected domestic market couldn't absorb production. Industries faced overcapacity, inefficiency, and technological backwardness.

Foreign debt mounted. Turkey borrowed heavily in the 1970s to finance development and cover trade deficits. External debt rose from roughly $2 billion in 1970 to over $15 billion by 1980. Debt service consumed increasing share of export earnings. By late 1970s, Turkey faced debt crisis—unable to meet payments, requiring rescheduling, and dependent on IMF loans with conditionality.

Labor unrest intensified as inflation destroyed real wages. Workers struck for wage increases to keep pace with inflation. Employers resisted, unable to afford raises given economic conditions. The state, facing fiscal crisis, couldn't mediate effectively. Strike activity reached unprecedented levels—hundreds of strikes annually involving hundreds of thousands of workers.

Income distribution worsened. Inflation hit workers and peasants hardest—their wages and incomes couldn't keep pace with prices. The wealthy could protect themselves through land ownership, foreign currency holdings, and business profits. Data suggests the Gini coefficient (measure of inequality) increased from roughly 0.50 in early 1970s to 0.55-0.57 by 1980—increasing inequality during economic crisis.

Coalition governments were unstable and ineffective. The 1973, 1977 elections produced fragmented results requiring coalitions between incompatible parties. Ecevit's CHP formed coalitions with Erbakan's Islamist National Salvation Party (MSP), creating left-Islamist governments that satisfied neither base. Demirel's AP formed right-wing coalitions that couldn't implement coherent policies. Governments fell, reformed, and fell again in rapid succession.

For our framework, the economic crisis created conditions where elite concluded civilian politics were ungovernable. But the crisis was partly elite-created—the import substitution model that enriched protected industries, the foreign borrowing that financed unsustainable consumption, and the refusal to implement progressive taxation or wealth redistribution that might have eased fiscal problems. Elite policies created crisis, then elite used crisis to justify suspending democracy.

The Kurdish Question in the 1970s

While left-right violence dominated headlines, Kurdish political mobilization was also developing in ways that would become central to Turkish politics. Understanding the Kurdish movement's emergence reveals another dimension of elite repression.

The Kurdish population in Turkey numbered perhaps 6-8 million by 1970s (estimates vary, as official census didn't count ethnicity and Kurdish identity was legally denied). Concentrated in southeastern and eastern Anatolia, Kurds were Turkey's largest ethnic minority. The Republic had denied Kurdish identity since founding—Kurds were declared "Mountain Turks," Kurdish language was banned from public use, and any Kurdish political organizing was prosecuted as separatism.

Kurdish rebellions in 1925, 1930, and 1937-1938 had been crushed brutally. For decades afterward, Kurdish regions were kept under military control, economically underdeveloped, and culturally suppressed. But new Kurdish political consciousness emerged in 1960s-1970s, influenced by global anti-colonial movements and leftist ideologies.

Kurdish students at Ankara University and other institutions began organizing in 1960s-1970s, initially within Turkish left movements but gradually developing distinct Kurdish nationalism. They argued Kurds were oppressed nation requiring self-determination, not just economic class requiring socialist revolution. This created tensions with Turkish left, which generally opposed Kurdish nationalism as divisive and wanted Kurds to join class struggle as workers rather than mobilize as separate nation.

Abdullah Öcalan, studying at Ankara University in mid-1970s, formed a group that would become the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) in 1978. The PKK combined Marxist-Leninist ideology with Kurdish nationalism, arguing for independent socialist Kurdish state. Initially small (perhaps a few hundred members), the PKK would become the most significant Kurdish organization and wage decades-long insurgency.

The state's response to Kurdish organizing was repression identical to that against leftists. Kurdish activists were arrested, tortured, imprisoned. Kurdish language publications were banned. Cultural expression was criminalized. The state denied Kurdish identity's existence while simultaneously targeting anyone who asserted it.

For our framework, the Kurdish question demonstrates how the Republican nation-state project required suppressing ethnic diversity to create homogeneous Turkish identity. The violence used to achieve this—from 1920s-1930s suppressions through 1970s repression to later PKK conflict—was continuous application of violence monopoly to maintain elite-defined national project. The Kurdish issue would explode in the 1980s and continue as Turkey's most persistent internal conflict.

VIII. THE 1980 COUP: BREAKING LABOR AND CONSOLIDATING NEOLIBERALISM (1980-1983)

The Coup's Execution and Scale of Repression

On September 12, 1980, the Turkish military, led by Chief of General Staff Kenan Evren, executed a coup that was more thorough and brutal than previous interventions. Understanding the coup's character reveals the violence monopoly's use to fundamentally restructure power relations.

The coup was bloodless in execution—military units seized control of government, arrested politicians, and declared military rule without resistance. But what followed was massive repression designed to break the left, crush labor organizing, and create conditions for economic restructuring.

The scale was enormous. Within three years of the coup:

- Approximately 650,000 people were detained and interrogated
- Roughly 230,000 were tried in courts, with 98,000+ receiving sentences
- 517 people were sentenced to death, with 50 executions carried out
- Over 300 people died under torture or in custody
- Approximately 400,000-500,000 people were banned from traveling abroad
- 30,000+ people went into exile to avoid arrest
- Tens of thousands lost their jobs in public sector purges

The targets were systematic. Trade unions were banned—all unions dissolved, leaders arrested, and organizing prohibited. DİSK confederation's leadership was tried in mass trials, with leaders receiving long prison sentences. Union membership, which had reached 4-5 million by 1980, collapsed to under 2 million and wouldn't recover for decades.

Political parties were dissolved—all parties from the 1970s were banned, their leaders prohibited from politics. Ecevit, Demirel, Erbakan, Türkeş—all were banned. This wasn't just targeting the left—it was wholesale elimination of existing political class (though many would return after ban expired in late 1980s).

Universities were thoroughly purged. Over 1,400 academics were fired, many more faced investigation and harassment. Student organizations were banned. Political activity on campuses was criminalized. The Higher Education Council (YÖK) was created to centralize control over universities, ending institutional autonomy.

Media was censored comprehensively. Newspapers were closed, journalists arrested, publications banned. Books were confiscated—reports claim over 300,000 books were seized and destroyed. Films, music, and cultural productions were subjected to military censorship. The military created Ministry of Culture to regulate cultural production.

Torture was systematic and pervasive. Detainees—leftists, trade unionists, Kurdish activists, but also ordinary citizens caught in sweeps—were subjected to torture designed to extract confessions, gather information, and terrorize populations. Methods included beatings, electric shock, sexual assault, psychological torture, and mock executions. The torture was not aberration but policy, used deliberately to break resistance.

The repression had clear class character. Workers, trade unionists, leftist intellectuals, and Kurdish activists bore the brunt. Business elites, landowners, and right-wing politicians faced far less repression. The Grey Wolves, whose violence had contributed to pre-coup chaos, were initially detained but received relatively lenient treatment compared to leftists. The military's repression targeted those who challenged capitalist property relations while protecting those who defended them.

The 1982 Constitution: Institutionalizing Repression

The military regime drafted a new constitution that was approved by referendum in November 1982 (with 91.4% approval, though voting occurred under military rule with no opposition permitted). The 1982 Constitution fundamentally restructured Turkish governance to prevent return to 1970s conditions.

The constitution concentrated executive power. The president (initially Evren, elected for seven-year term by military-controlled constituent assembly) gained extensive powers to appoint judges, dismiss parliament, and declare emergencies. The prime minister's power was reduced relative to president. The cabinet operated under both parliamentary and presidential authority.

Parliament's power was weakened. The Senate was eliminated (return to unicameral system). Parliament's ability to investigate government was restricted. Legislative process was made more difficult through requirements for supermajorities on certain issues. The parliament elected in 1983 would have limited ability to challenge military-designed system.

The judiciary was restructured to ensure regime loyalty. The Constitutional Court, Council of State, and other high courts were filled with judges appointed by military regime. The judiciary would protect the constitutional order (meaning Kemalist principles and economic system) against democratic challenges.

Labor rights were severely restricted. The constitution guaranteed right to work and form unions, but implementation laws made organizing extremely difficult. Strikes were prohibited in many sectors. Collective bargaining was constrained. Union pluralism was restricted—multiple unions couldn't exist in single workplace, preventing competition. The restrictions were designed to break labor power permanently.

The military's political role was institutionalized. The National Security Council was strengthened, giving military formal power to "advise" government on security matters (in practice, military's "advice" was binding). Senior military commanders would continue holding veto power over civilian governments. This formalized the military's guardian role that had been exercised through coups—now it was constitutional.

Fundamental rights were subordinated to state interests. Freedom of expression, assembly, and association all existed but were limited by broad restrictions for national security, public order, and protection of the state. In practice, these restrictions allowed state to suppress dissent while maintaining democratic appearance.

For our framework, the 1982 Constitution represents elite redesign of political institutions to prevent challenges to their power. The labor movement that had threatened elite interests in the 1970s was constitutionally neutered. The left politics that had mobilized workers was criminalized. And the military's role as ultimate authority was formalized. Democracy would resume, but within boundaries ensuring it couldn't threaten elite interests.

Economic Restructuring: The Neoliberal Turn

The coup occurred just as global capitalism was shifting toward neoliberalism—deregulation, privatization, free trade, and rolling back state intervention. Turkey's post-coup economic restructuring, led by Turgut Özal (first as architect of economic policy under military rule, then as prime minister from 1983), transformed Turkish capitalism while preserving elite dominance.

The January 24, 1980 decisions (announced months before the coup, implemented after) marked the beginning. These decisions included: devaluing the lira to promote exports, reducing import restrictions, lifting price controls, cutting subsidies, encouraging foreign investment, and shifting from import substitution to export-oriented growth. The decisions were made under IMF pressure and with IMF funding support.

The timing is crucial—the economic restructuring was decided before the coup but implemented after, when labor was crushed and resistance was impossible. This suggests coordination between economic and military elites. The IMF and Turkish technocrats wanted economic liberalization; the military ensured it could be implemented by destroying organized labor's capacity to resist.

Privatization began cautiously under military rule and accelerated in the 1980s-1990s. State enterprises in manufacturing, mining, banking, and telecommunications were sold to private buyers. The sales enriched connected business groups who acquired state assets at favorable prices. The Koç and Sabancı holdings expanded dramatically through privatization, consolidating their positions as Turkey's wealthiest business empires.

Export-oriented industrialization created new winners and losers. Some manufacturing sectors (textiles, automotive parts, consumer goods) that could compete internationally benefited. They received incentives, credit access, and infrastructure support. But sectors oriented toward domestic market, particularly small and medium enterprises, faced hardship as import competition intensified.

Agriculture was particularly affected. Subsidies were reduced, price supports eliminated, and farmers were exposed to international competition. Large commercial farmers who could modernize and produce for export benefited. Small subsistence farmers faced crisis—they couldn't compete, couldn't access credit, and couldn't afford mechanization. Rural-urban migration accelerated as millions left agriculture for cities.

Foreign investment increased, particularly in manufacturing assembly operations and, later, in services. Multinational corporations established operations, often partnering with Turkish

business groups. This created employment but also created dependency—Turkish economy became integrated into global capitalism in subordinate position, producing for export using imported technology and components.

Wealth inequality increased dramatically. Data shows the Gini coefficient rose from roughly 0.51-0.52 in 1980 to 0.57-0.58 by 1990. The top 10% of income earners captured increasing share—from roughly 33-35% of total income in 1980 to 38-40% by 1990. The bottom 40% saw their share decline from roughly 16-17% to 13-14%. Real wages fell sharply in early 1980s and recovered only slowly, remaining below 1977 levels through most of the decade.

For our framework, the neoliberal restructuring demonstrates how elite used coup-created conditions to transform capitalism in their favor. The crushing of labor removed resistance to wage cuts, privatization, and elimination of worker protections. The restructuring enriched those already wealthy—business groups acquired state assets, landowners mechanized using cheap credit, and financial elites profited from deregulation. Workers and peasants bore the costs through unemployment, falling real wages, and elimination of social protections.

The pattern matches global neoliberal turn in the 1980s—Thatcher's Britain, Reagan's America, Pinochet's Chile. In each case, crushing labor (through legal changes in Britain/America, through coups in Chile/Turkey) enabled economic restructuring that benefited capital at labor's expense. Turkey's experience was part of global capitalist transformation using state violence to impose market discipline on workers.

IX. ASSESSMENT: 1923-1980 CONTINUITY AND TRANSFORMATION

What Changed Over 57 Years?

Turkey in 1980 was dramatically different from Turkey in 1923 in many measurable ways. The differences represent genuine transformations that improved many lives while maintaining fundamental hierarchies.

Population and urbanization: Turkey's population grew from roughly 13 million (1923) to 44 million (1980). Urbanization increased from perhaps 20-25% to roughly 44%. Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir became major cities with millions of residents. This demographic shift transformed social structure—Turkey became increasingly urban, industrial society rather than predominantly agricultural.

Literacy and education: Literacy increased from roughly 10-15% (1923) to over 60% (1980). Primary education became nearly universal. Secondary and university education expanded dramatically. This created educated middle class and transformed cultural life. Access to information increased, enabling political participation and economic advancement for millions.

Industrial development: Turkey developed substantial industrial base. Manufacturing contributed roughly 20-25% of GDP by 1980 (vs. perhaps 5-10% in 1923). Turkey produced textiles, automotive products, consumer goods, cement, steel, and chemicals. The economy diversified beyond agriculture, creating industrial working class numbering millions.

Infrastructure: Turkey built extensive road networks, railways, ports, airports, dams, and power plants. Electricity reached most areas (vs. minimal coverage in 1923). Communications improved—telephone, radio, and television connected populations. Infrastructure enabled economic development and integrated the national economy.

Women's status: Women gained legal equality, voting rights, access to education and professions. Female literacy increased from perhaps 5% to over 50%. Women entered workforce in growing numbers, particularly in cities. These were genuine advances, though gender inequality persisted in practice and was extreme in rural areas.

Health: Life expectancy increased from roughly 35-40 years to 58-60 years. Infant mortality declined from over 300 per 1000 to roughly 110 per 1000. These improvements reflected better nutrition, sanitation, and medical care. Millions of lives were saved and extended.

These transformations were real, substantial, and consequential. Turkey in 1980 was developed, urbanized, literate society dramatically different from the Ottoman Empire's ruins in 1923. The Kemalist modernization project achieved many of its stated goals.

What Persisted: The Three Monopolies

Despite these transformations, the fundamental structure of elite power persisted across 57 years. The three monopolies remained concentrated, though their specific forms evolved.

Wealth monopoly:

Land ownership remained highly concentrated throughout the period. The failure of land reform meant large estates persisted. Data from 1963 agricultural census showed roughly 65% of agricultural land in holdings over 100 hectares owned by less than 5% of families. By 1980, concentration had increased—mechanization enabled larger operations while small holders were displaced.

Industrial capital was even more concentrated. The major business groups—Koç, Sabancı, and others—controlled vast empires spanning manufacturing, finance, trade, and services. These groups emerged through state support, protected markets, and connections rather than pure market competition. The top 10 business families probably controlled 30-40% of industrial capital by 1980.

Wealth inequality, measured by Gini coefficient, remained high—roughly 0.50-0.52 in early 1960s, increasing to 0.57-0.58 by 1980. Turkey was more unequal than Western European social democracies and comparable to Latin American countries with similar histories of concentrated land ownership.

Income distribution similarly showed high inequality. The top 10% captured 35-40% of total income throughout the period (increasing to 40%+ by 1980). The bottom 40% received only 12-15% of income. Working-class and peasant families lived at subsistence or near-subsistence despite overall economic growth.

Violence monopoly:

The state's monopoly on organized violence remained absolute and was used repeatedly to suppress challenges. The pattern across 57 years was consistent:

- Kurdish rebellions (1925, 1930, 1937-38) crushed through overwhelming military force
- Labor organizing suppressed through legal restrictions and, when necessary, police violence
- Leftist movements destroyed through 1971 and 1980 repressions
- Political opposition constrained by military interventions (1960, 1971, 1980) when it exceeded acceptable boundaries

The military's role as ultimate political authority was formalized by 1980. Three successful coups demonstrated that civilian politics operated within military-defined boundaries. Democracy was real but constrained—parties could compete, elections occurred, power transferred, but certain outcomes (genuine land reform, labor power, Kurdish rights, socialist transformation) were prevented by military as guardian of elite interests.

Police and paramilitary forces maintained order in ways that protected property and suppressed resistance. The Grey Wolves' violence against leftists in 1970s, tolerated or enabled by state, demonstrated how violence monopoly could be delegated to private forces when convenient. The pattern echoed Ottoman use of Kurdish irregulars against Armenians—official state forces supplemented by irregular forces targeting enemies, creating deniability while achieving suppression.

Information monopoly:

This was most contested monopoly, reflecting genuine democratization and education expansion. By 1980, diverse media existed, literacy was widespread, universities educated hundreds of thousands, and information circulation was substantial compared to 1923.

But control persisted through several mechanisms:

- State controlled television and radio broadcasting (monopoly until 1990s)
- Censorship remained extensive—books, films, publications were banned routinely
- Universities were state-controlled and subject to purges (especially after 1971, 1980)
- Education taught Kemalist ideology as mandatory curriculum
- Military and civilian courts prosecuted "thought crimes"—expressing certain ideas was criminal
- Torture and imprisonment of intellectuals created self-censorship

The 1980 coup particularly demonstrated information control. Over 300,000 books were destroyed, journalists were arrested, newspapers were closed, academics were fired, and cultural production was censored. This wholesale assault on independent thought demonstrated that information freedom existed only within boundaries elite deemed acceptable.

Elite Composition: Continuity and Circulation

The specific families and individuals comprising the elite changed somewhat over 57 years, but the class character remained constant. Three patterns characterize elite composition:

Continuity of major families: Some ayan families who supported Kemal in the 1920s remained elite through 1980. Families who acquired land through late Ottoman appropriations or through confiscated minority properties maintained their holdings across generations. The Koç and Sabancı families, rising from commercial success in Ottoman/early Republican periods, became industrial dynasties. Large landowner families in regions like Çukurova and Aegean maintained estates across decades.

Upward mobility through state service: Military officers, high bureaucrats, and professionals could rise into elite through careers. Successful officers became politicians (Kemal himself, Evren, others). Bureaucrats accumulated wealth through corruption and connections. Professionals (doctors, lawyers, engineers) joined middle/upper classes. But this mobility reinforced the system—those who rose through state service supported state power and property rights.

Exclusion of workers and peasants: The working class and peasantry remained excluded from elite throughout the period. No significant political movement successfully brought workers or peasants into power. Strikes won concessions but didn't fundamentally shift power. Land reform's failure meant peasants remained subordinate. The 1980 coup crushed the labor movement that had briefly challenged elite power.

Did Democracy Change Fundamental Power Relations?

Turkey's transition from single-party dictatorship (1923-1946) to multi-party democracy (1946-1960, 1961-1980 with military interruptions) represents genuine political change. Elections were competitive, parties alternated in power, opposition could organize (within limits), and democratic norms developed. This was not mere theater—democracy was real.

But democracy operated within constraints that prevented challenging elite power:

Electoral boundaries: Both major parties (CHP and AP/DP) were elite-led and elite-dominated. Workers and peasants could vote but couldn't organize autonomous political movements that threatened property. When the left (TİP) emerged in 1960s offering genuine alternative, it was crushed.

Military oversight: Three coups demonstrated that democracy was conditional. The military intervened when civilian politics threatened Kemalist principles (meaning elite interests). Democratic governments operated knowing military could intervene—this constrained policy choices even without overt intervention.

Economic power: Concentrated wealth translated into political power. Business groups funded parties, influenced policy through lobbying, and used media ownership to shape discourse. Landowners controlled rural votes through patronage and dependence. Concentrated economic power meant democracy couldn't overcome elite interests even when majorities voted for change.

Violence capacity: Elite retained monopoly on organized violence. This meant resistance could always be suppressed when necessary. The 1980 coup demonstrated this decisively—labor organizing that threatened profits, leftist movements that threatened capitalism, all crushed through overwhelming force.

The pattern suggests that democracy in capitalist society with extreme inequality cannot fundamentally redistribute power. Elite tolerate democracy when it serves legitimacy functions and enables competition among elite fractions, but use violence when democracy threatens property. This is not unique to Turkey—it's characteristic of capitalist democracy generally, but Turkey's extreme inequality and military interventions make the pattern particularly visible.

Conclusion: Adaptation Through Successive Crises

From 1923-1980, Turkish elites adapted through:

- Transition from empire to republic (1923)
- Single-party to multi-party democracy (1946-1950)
- Multiple military coups (1960, 1971, 1980)
- Economic model shifts (étatism to liberalization to neoliberalism)
- Political party changes (CHP dominance to AP/DP to coalition instability)

Through all these transformations, elite maintained control of wealth, violence, and information. The specific individuals and families changed partially, elite fractions competed, and institutional forms evolved. But the fundamental structure persisted—small elite controlling productive assets and using state violence to maintain domination over workers and peasants.

The 1980 coup represents the clearest example of elite power consolidation in the face of challenge. When labor organizing threatened to redistribute power, when leftist politics offered alternatives to capitalism, and when economic crisis created opportunity for transformation—elite used violence monopoly decisively to crush resistance and restructure economy in their favor.

This pattern extends across 681 years (1299-1980) now documented. From Ottoman beylik through imperial expansion, decline, reform, revolution, and republic—elite power persisted

through adaptation. The 1980s and beyond (Part 4) will show whether this pattern continues into contemporary Turkey or whether fundamental transformation finally breaks elite power.

Part 3 Complete (Sections 1-2, ~28,000 words total covering 1923-1980)

Coverage:

- 1960s: Rise of labor organizing and TİP (socialist party), but military intervened 1971
- 1971 "coup by memorandum": Systematic repression of left, labor movement weakened
- 1970s: Left-right violence (5,000+ deaths), economic crisis, political instability
- 1980 coup: Massive repression (650,000 detained, 50 executed, 300+ died under torture)
- Labor crushed: Union membership halved, DİSK leaders imprisoned, strikes prohibited
- 1982 Constitution: Institutionalized military oversight, restricted labor rights
- Neoliberal restructuring: Özal's liberalization benefited elite, crushed workers
- Assessment 1923-1980: Three monopolies persisted through all transformations

The Answer (Extended): 681 years (1299-1980): Elite adapted through empire-to-republic transformation, single-party to multi-party democracy, three military coups, and neoliberal restructuring—maintaining control of wealth, violence, and information throughout.

Next: Part 4 covering 1980-2025 (Özal era, military withdrawal from politics, AKP rise, Erdoğan autocracy, Syrian refugees, contemporary wealth concentration) to complete the full 726-year analysis.

TURKEY CASE STUDY - PART 3 SECTION 2

From Ottoman Empire to Turkish Republic (1299-2025)

Political Crisis, Violence, and Military Repression (1960-1980)

VI. THE UNSTABLE 1960s: COALITION GOVERNMENTS AND RISING LEFT (1961-1971)

Political Fragmentation and Elite Competition

The 1961 elections produced fragmentation that would characterize the entire decade. The 1961 Constitution's proportional representation system enabled smaller parties to gain seats, preventing single-party majorities and requiring coalition governments. Understanding this instability reveals elite faction competition and the limits of Turkish democracy.

The Republican People's Party (CHP) won plurality with 36.7% of votes and 173 seats in the 450-seat assembly. The Justice Party (AP), successor to banned Democrat Party and representing similar constituencies, won 34.8% and 158 seats. Two smaller DP successor parties, New Turkey Party (YTP) and Republican Peasant Nation Party (CKMP), won 65 seats combined. The remaining seats went to independents and minor parties.

The fragmentation reflected both institutional design (proportional representation) and genuine social divisions. The CHP represented urban middle classes, bureaucrats, intellectuals, and secularists. The AP represented merchants, large landowners, commercial farmers, and religious conservatives. The smaller parties represented regional interests, specific ideological factions, or personality-based followings.

Coalition governments were unstable and short-lived. Between 1961-1965, Turkey had four different governments as coalitions formed, collapsed, and reformed. Policy continuity was difficult. Reforms stalled. Economic management suffered. But beneath the surface instability, fundamental patterns persisted—property rights were protected, labor organizing was controlled, and the military maintained oversight through the National Security Council.

The 1965 election gave the Justice Party clear majority (52.9%, 240 seats). Süleyman Demirel became prime minister, a position he would hold repeatedly over the next three decades. Demirel exemplified the Turkish political elite—trained as engineer, worked in American-funded development projects, rose through AP ranks, represented commercial-agricultural interests

while maintaining military connections. He was pragmatic rather than ideological, willing to make deals, and skilled at navigating elite factions.

The AP government (1965-1971) pursued pro-business policies similar to the DP era. Economic growth was strong in mid-1960s, benefiting industrialists and large farmers. But inequality increased, and urban workers and rural poor saw minimal improvement. This created space for left-wing politics to emerge.

The Workers Party of Turkey and Labor Organizing

The 1960s saw the first significant left-wing political organizing in Republican Turkey's history. The Workers Party of Turkey (Türkiye İşçi Partisi, TİP), founded in 1961, represented socialist politics openly for the first time. Understanding TİP's rise and suppression reveals how elite responded to challenges from below.

TİP was founded by trade union leaders and leftist intellectuals who saw opportunity in the 1961 Constitution's expanded rights. The party advocated socialist policies—nationalization of major industries, comprehensive land reform, workers' control, expanded social services, and anti-imperialism (opposing American bases and NATO membership). Its program explicitly challenged capitalist property relations rather than seeking accommodation within them.

TİP won 3% of votes in 1965 elections, gaining 15 seats. This was modest but significant—a socialist party had won parliamentary representation. TİP deputies included trade unionists, professors, and intellectuals who used parliament to advocate for workers and peasants. Mehmet Ali Aybar, TİP's leader, was eloquent socialist intellectual who articulated systematic critique of Turkish capitalism.

More importantly, TİP represented broader labor mobilization. Trade union membership grew from roughly 300,000 in early 1960s to over 1 million by end of decade. Strike activity increased dramatically—from handful of strikes annually in 1950s to hundreds in late 1960s. Workers in textile factories, automotive plants, ports, and mines organized unions, conducted strikes, and demanded better wages and conditions.

The 1963 strike wave particularly alarmed elites. Major strikes in textile and mining sectors involved tens of thousands of workers and lasted weeks. The strikes were largely successful—workers won wage increases and better conditions. But success alarmed both AP government and military. If workers could paralyze production through strikes, they had power that threatened elite control.

Student movements also emerged in the 1960s, influenced by global 1968 protests. University students occupied campuses, demanded educational reforms, protested American imperialism, and allied with labor movements. The student left was radical—some embraced Marxism-Leninism, others Maoism, and some would eventually turn to armed struggle. But in the 1960s, student movements were primarily political and cultural rather than violent.

For our framework, the 1960s left emergence represented the first sustained challenge to elite power from below since the Republic's founding. Workers organizing autonomously, articulating class interests, and using strikes to extract concessions—this was precisely what the Ottoman and Republican elite had suppressed for centuries. The elite response would be decisive.

The 1971 "Coup by Memorandum"

On March 12, 1971, the Turkish military's top commanders delivered an ultimatum to Prime Minister Demirel: resign, allow technocratic government to implement reforms and restore order, or face direct military intervention. Demirel resigned, and a government of technocrats supported by military took power. This "coup by memorandum" was softer than 1960's direct seizure but equally effective at asserting military dominance.

The military's justification combined genuine and manufactured concerns. Turkey faced serious economic problems—inflation, trade deficits, unemployment. Left-right political violence was increasing (discussed below). And most crucially from military perspective, leftist movements threatened to transform Turkey toward socialism. The military claimed intervention was necessary to prevent chaos and protect the state.

But the real target was the left. The post-1971 period saw systematic repression of labor, socialist parties, student movements, and anyone associated with leftist politics. The TİP was banned and its leaders arrested. Dozens of leftist intellectuals, professors, journalists, and activists were tried in military courts on charges of communist activity. Torture was systematic—thousands of leftists were detained, tortured, and imprisoned.

Labor unions were purged of leftist leadership. Strike activity was suppressed—strikes were declared illegal in many sectors, and workers who struck faced arrest. The confederation of revolutionary trade unions (DİSK, founded 1967 as leftist alternative to state-controlled Türk-İş) was particularly targeted. Its leaders were arrested, member unions were harassed, and its ability to organize was severely constrained.

Universities were purged. Professors with leftist views were fired. Students involved in protests were expelled or arrested. The military saw universities as breeding grounds for subversion and moved decisively to eliminate leftist influence. The academic freedom that the 1961 Constitution had promised was revealed as conditional—acceptable only when it didn't challenge elite interests.

The repression was brutal but effective. By 1973, when civilian politics resumed and elections were held, the left had been decimated. TİP never recovered—it won no seats in 1973 and eventually dissolved. Labor organizing was weakened, though not eliminated. Student movements were driven underground or into armed struggle. The message was clear: organizing to challenge elite power would be met with overwhelming state violence.

For our framework, the 1971 intervention demonstrates elite use of violence monopoly when threatened by mobilized labor and left politics. The military intervened not to protect democracy

(which was functioning) but to crush movements that threatened capitalist property relations. The pattern is identical to Ottoman suppressions of peasant revolts or early Republican crushing of Kurdish rebellions—the specific targets change (leftists rather than ethnic nationalists or religious movements), but the function is identical.

Crucially, the repression had support from industrial and landed elites who feared labor organizing and land reform demands. The military acted as enforcer for elite class interests, using violence monopoly to suppress challenges from below. This coordination between violence holders (military) and wealth holders (industrialists, landowners) demonstrates how elite fractions cooperate when fundamental interests are threatened, despite competing in normal politics.

VII. THE 1970s: VIOLENCE, CRISIS, AND BREAKDOWN (1971-1980)

Left-Right Political Violence

The 1970s saw escalating political violence between left and right militant groups that would be used to justify the 1980 coup. Understanding this violence's sources and character reveals both genuine social conflict and elite manipulation.

The left fragmented after 1971 repression. Some concluded peaceful organizing was impossible and turned to armed struggle. Revolutionary organizations emerged—Dev-Genç (Revolutionary Youth), THKO (Turkish People's Liberation Army), THKP-C (Turkish People's Liberation Party-Front), and later Dev-Sol (Revolutionary Left). These groups conducted bank robberies, kidnappings, and attacks on police and military targets. They saw themselves as revolutionary vanguard preparing for armed overthrow of the capitalist state.

The most famous incident was the March 1971 kidnapping and killing of Israeli consul general by THKP-C, led by Mahir Çayan. The group demanded release of imprisoned leftists and publicized revolutionary manifesto. When demands weren't met, they killed hostages and were themselves killed by military in armed confrontation. Çayan became martyr for radical left, demonstrating both revolutionary commitment and futility of armed struggle against state with overwhelming violence capacity.

But left violence, while dramatic, was relatively limited. Leftist groups numbered perhaps a few thousand militants at peak, conducted dozens of operations annually, and killed perhaps a few hundred people total across the decade. They were serious threat to individuals they targeted but never approached threatening state power militarily. The Turkish military could crush any armed leftist movement whenever it chose.

The right-wing violence was larger in scale and more deadly, yet received less state repression. The Grey Wolves (Bozkurtlar), militant wing of the Nationalist Action Party (MHP) led by Alparslan Türkeş, numbered tens of thousands of members. They received training, weapons, and protection from elements within the state security apparatus who saw them as useful anti-communist force.

Grey Wolves attacked leftists, trade unionists, progressive intellectuals, and Alevis (heterodox Muslim minority associated with left). They conducted massacres—Maraş (1978, over 100 Alevis killed), Çorum (1980, dozens killed), and numerous smaller attacks. They assassinated progressive politicians, journalists, and professors. They attacked labor union offices and leftist bookstores. Their violence was systematic, organized, and explicitly fascist in ideology.

Total deaths from political violence in the 1970s are estimated at 5,000-6,000 (estimates vary). Right-wing violence accounted for perhaps 60-70% of deaths, left-wing violence perhaps 25-30%, with security forces responsible for the remainder. But media and state discourse presented left as primary threat, justifying repression while tolerating or enabling right violence.

For our framework, this violence pattern reveals state complicity in creating "chaos" that would justify military intervention. The state could have suppressed right-wing violence—it had overwhelming force capacity and many Grey Wolves attacks were known to police in advance. But suppressing the right would eliminate a useful anti-communist force. Instead, the state tolerated right violence while crushing left, creating appearance of left-right balance that justified "neutral" military intervention to restore order.

The violence also prevented labor organizing and left politics from developing peacefully. Workers who might join unions feared Grey Wolves attacks. Intellectuals who might write progressive critiques faced assassination. The violence created climate where challenging elite power was literally life-threatening, suppressing dissent more effectively than legal repression alone could.

Economic Crisis and Stagflation

The 1970s brought severe economic crisis that intersected with political violence to create ungovernable conditions. Understanding the economic crisis reveals both global forces and Turkish elite choices that created conditions for military intervention.

The 1973 oil crisis hit Turkey hard. As oil importer dependent on Middle East oil, Turkey faced huge price increases that caused inflation to spike. The 1973-1974 period saw inflation rise from roughly 15% to over 25% annually. Economic growth slowed, creating stagflation—inflation plus stagnation, the worst of both worlds.

The Cyprus conflict (1974) compounded problems. Turkey invaded Cyprus in response to Greek Cypriot coup, occupying northern third of the island. The invasion was popular domestically and achieved strategic objectives, but it brought American arms embargo, international isolation,

and military expenditure Turkey could ill afford. The embargo particularly hurt military modernization efforts and created resentment toward Western allies.

Import substitution industrialization (ISI), the development model Turkey had followed since the 1930s, was exhausting its potential. ISI protected domestic industries from foreign competition through tariffs and import restrictions, enabling industrialization but creating inefficiencies. By the 1970s, Turkish industry couldn't compete internationally, and the protected domestic market couldn't absorb production. Industries faced overcapacity, inefficiency, and technological backwardness.

Foreign debt mounted. Turkey borrowed heavily in the 1970s to finance development and cover trade deficits. External debt rose from roughly $2 billion in 1970 to over $15 billion by 1980. Debt service consumed increasing share of export earnings. By late 1970s, Turkey faced debt crisis—unable to meet payments, requiring rescheduling, and dependent on IMF loans with conditionality.

Labor unrest intensified as inflation destroyed real wages. Workers struck for wage increases to keep pace with inflation. Employers resisted, unable to afford raises given economic conditions. The state, facing fiscal crisis, couldn't mediate effectively. Strike activity reached unprecedented levels—hundreds of strikes annually involving hundreds of thousands of workers.

Income distribution worsened. Inflation hit workers and peasants hardest—their wages and incomes couldn't keep pace with prices. The wealthy could protect themselves through land ownership, foreign currency holdings, and business profits. Data suggests the Gini coefficient (measure of inequality) increased from roughly 0.50 in early 1970s to 0.55-0.57 by 1980—increasing inequality during economic crisis.

Coalition governments were unstable and ineffective. The 1973, 1977 elections produced fragmented results requiring coalitions between incompatible parties. Ecevit's CHP formed coalitions with Erbakan's Islamist National Salvation Party (MSP), creating left-Islamist governments that satisfied neither base. Demirel's AP formed right-wing coalitions that couldn't implement coherent policies. Governments fell, reformed, and fell again in rapid succession.

For our framework, the economic crisis created conditions where elite concluded civilian politics were ungovernable. But the crisis was partly elite-created—the import substitution model that enriched protected industries, the foreign borrowing that financed unsustainable consumption, and the refusal to implement progressive taxation or wealth redistribution that might have eased fiscal problems. Elite policies created crisis, then elite used crisis to justify suspending democracy.

The Kurdish Question in the 1970s

While left-right violence dominated headlines, Kurdish political mobilization was also developing in ways that would become central to Turkish politics. Understanding the Kurdish movement's emergence reveals another dimension of elite repression.

The Kurdish population in Turkey numbered perhaps 6-8 million by 1970s (estimates vary, as official census didn't count ethnicity and Kurdish identity was legally denied). Concentrated in southeastern and eastern Anatolia, Kurds were Turkey's largest ethnic minority. The Republic had denied Kurdish identity since founding—Kurds were declared "Mountain Turks," Kurdish language was banned from public use, and any Kurdish political organizing was prosecuted as separatism.

Kurdish rebellions in 1925, 1930, and 1937-1938 had been crushed brutally. For decades afterward, Kurdish regions were kept under military control, economically underdeveloped, and culturally suppressed. But new Kurdish political consciousness emerged in 1960s-1970s, influenced by global anti-colonial movements and leftist ideologies.

Kurdish students at Ankara University and other institutions began organizing in 1960s-1970s, initially within Turkish left movements but gradually developing distinct Kurdish nationalism. They argued Kurds were oppressed nation requiring self-determination, not just economic class requiring socialist revolution. This created tensions with Turkish left, which generally opposed Kurdish nationalism as divisive and wanted Kurds to join class struggle as workers rather than mobilize as separate nation.

Abdullah Öcalan, studying at Ankara University in mid-1970s, formed a group that would become the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) in 1978. The PKK combined Marxist-Leninist ideology with Kurdish nationalism, arguing for independent socialist Kurdish state. Initially small (perhaps a few hundred members), the PKK would become the most significant Kurdish organization and wage decades-long insurgency.

The state's response to Kurdish organizing was repression identical to that against leftists. Kurdish activists were arrested, tortured, imprisoned. Kurdish language publications were banned. Cultural expression was criminalized. The state denied Kurdish identity's existence while simultaneously targeting anyone who asserted it.

For our framework, the Kurdish question demonstrates how the Republican nation-state project required suppressing ethnic diversity to create homogeneous Turkish identity. The violence used to achieve this—from 1920s-1930s suppressions through 1970s repression to later PKK conflict—was continuous application of violence monopoly to maintain elite-defined national project. The Kurdish issue would explode in the 1980s and continue as Turkey's most persistent internal conflict.

VIII. THE 1980 COUP: BREAKING LABOR AND CONSOLIDATING NEOLIBERALISM (1980-1983)

The Coup's Execution and Scale of Repression

On September 12, 1980, the Turkish military, led by Chief of General Staff Kenan Evren, executed a coup that was more thorough and brutal than previous interventions. Understanding the coup's character reveals the violence monopoly's use to fundamentally restructure power relations.

The coup was bloodless in execution—military units seized control of government, arrested politicians, and declared military rule without resistance. But what followed was massive repression designed to break the left, crush labor organizing, and create conditions for economic restructuring.

The scale was enormous. Within three years of the coup:

- Approximately 650,000 people were detained and interrogated
- Roughly 230,000 were tried in courts, with 98,000+ receiving sentences
- 517 people were sentenced to death, with 50 executions carried out
- Over 300 people died under torture or in custody
- Approximately 400,000-500,000 people were banned from traveling abroad
- 30,000+ people went into exile to avoid arrest
- Tens of thousands lost their jobs in public sector purges

The targets were systematic. Trade unions were banned—all unions dissolved, leaders arrested, and organizing prohibited. DİSK confederation's leadership was tried in mass trials, with leaders receiving long prison sentences. Union membership, which had reached 4-5 million by 1980, collapsed to under 2 million and wouldn't recover for decades.

Political parties were dissolved—all parties from the 1970s were banned, their leaders prohibited from politics. Ecevit, Demirel, Erbakan, Türkeş—all were banned. This wasn't just targeting the left—it was wholesale elimination of existing political class (though many would return after ban expired in late 1980s).

Universities were thoroughly purged. Over 1,400 academics were fired, many more faced investigation and harassment. Student organizations were banned. Political activity on campuses was criminalized. The Higher Education Council (YÖK) was created to centralize control over universities, ending institutional autonomy.

Media was censored comprehensively. Newspapers were closed, journalists arrested, publications banned. Books were confiscated—reports claim over 300,000 books were seized and destroyed. Films, music, and cultural productions were subjected to military censorship. The military created Ministry of Culture to regulate cultural production.

Torture was systematic and pervasive. Detainees—leftists, trade unionists, Kurdish activists, but also ordinary citizens caught in sweeps—were subjected to torture designed to extract confessions, gather information, and terrorize populations. Methods included beatings, electric shock, sexual assault, psychological torture, and mock executions. The torture was not aberration but policy, used deliberately to break resistance.

The repression had clear class character. Workers, trade unionists, leftist intellectuals, and Kurdish activists bore the brunt. Business elites, landowners, and right-wing politicians faced far less repression. The Grey Wolves, whose violence had contributed to pre-coup chaos, were initially detained but received relatively lenient treatment compared to leftists. The military's repression targeted those who challenged capitalist property relations while protecting those who defended them.

The 1982 Constitution: Institutionalizing Repression

The military regime drafted a new constitution that was approved by referendum in November 1982 (with 91.4% approval, though voting occurred under military rule with no opposition permitted). The 1982 Constitution fundamentally restructured Turkish governance to prevent return to 1970s conditions.

The constitution concentrated executive power. The president (initially Evren, elected for seven-year term by military-controlled constituent assembly) gained extensive powers to appoint judges, dismiss parliament, and declare emergencies. The prime minister's power was reduced relative to president. The cabinet operated under both parliamentary and presidential authority.

Parliament's power was weakened. The Senate was eliminated (return to unicameral system). Parliament's ability to investigate government was restricted. Legislative process was made more difficult through requirements for supermajorities on certain issues. The parliament elected in 1983 would have limited ability to challenge military-designed system.

The judiciary was restructured to ensure regime loyalty. The Constitutional Court, Council of State, and other high courts were filled with judges appointed by military regime. The judiciary would protect the constitutional order (meaning Kemalist principles and economic system) against democratic challenges.

Labor rights were severely restricted. The constitution guaranteed right to work and form unions, but implementation laws made organizing extremely difficult. Strikes were prohibited in many sectors. Collective bargaining was constrained. Union pluralism was restricted—multiple unions couldn't exist in single workplace, preventing competition. The restrictions were designed to break labor power permanently.

The military's political role was institutionalized. The National Security Council was strengthened, giving military formal power to "advise" government on security matters (in practice, military's "advice" was binding). Senior military commanders would continue holding veto power over civilian governments. This formalized the military's guardian role that had been exercised through coups—now it was constitutional.

Fundamental rights were subordinated to state interests. Freedom of expression, assembly, and association all existed but were limited by broad restrictions for national security, public order, and protection of the state. In practice, these restrictions allowed state to suppress dissent while maintaining democratic appearance.

For our framework, the 1982 Constitution represents elite redesign of political institutions to prevent challenges to their power. The labor movement that had threatened elite interests in the 1970s was constitutionally neutered. The left politics that had mobilized workers was criminalized. And the military's role as ultimate authority was formalized. Democracy would resume, but within boundaries ensuring it couldn't threaten elite interests.

Economic Restructuring: The Neoliberal Turn

The coup occurred just as global capitalism was shifting toward neoliberalism—deregulation, privatization, free trade, and rolling back state intervention. Turkey's post-coup economic restructuring, led by Turgut Özal (first as architect of economic policy under military rule, then as prime minister from 1983), transformed Turkish capitalism while preserving elite dominance.

The January 24, 1980 decisions (announced months before the coup, implemented after) marked the beginning. These decisions included: devaluing the lira to promote exports, reducing import restrictions, lifting price controls, cutting subsidies, encouraging foreign investment, and shifting from import substitution to export-oriented growth. The decisions were made under IMF pressure and with IMF funding support.

The timing is crucial—the economic restructuring was decided before the coup but implemented after, when labor was crushed and resistance was impossible. This suggests coordination between economic and military elites. The IMF and Turkish technocrats wanted economic liberalization; the military ensured it could be implemented by destroying organized labor's capacity to resist.

Privatization began cautiously under military rule and accelerated in the 1980s-1990s. State enterprises in manufacturing, mining, banking, and telecommunications were sold to private buyers. The sales enriched connected business groups who acquired state assets at favorable prices. The Koç and Sabancı holdings expanded dramatically through privatization, consolidating their positions as Turkey's wealthiest business empires.

Export-oriented industrialization created new winners and losers. Some manufacturing sectors (textiles, automotive parts, consumer goods) that could compete internationally benefited. They received incentives, credit access, and infrastructure support. But sectors oriented toward domestic market, particularly small and medium enterprises, faced hardship as import competition intensified.

Agriculture was particularly affected. Subsidies were reduced, price supports eliminated, and farmers were exposed to international competition. Large commercial farmers who could modernize and produce for export benefited. Small subsistence farmers faced crisis—they couldn't compete, couldn't access credit, and couldn't afford mechanization. Rural-urban migration accelerated as millions left agriculture for cities.

Foreign investment increased, particularly in manufacturing assembly operations and, later, in services. Multinational corporations established operations, often partnering with Turkish

business groups. This created employment but also created dependency—Turkish economy became integrated into global capitalism in subordinate position, producing for export using imported technology and components.

Wealth inequality increased dramatically. Data shows the Gini coefficient rose from roughly 0.51-0.52 in 1980 to 0.57-0.58 by 1990. The top 10% of income earners captured increasing share—from roughly 33-35% of total income in 1980 to 38-40% by 1990. The bottom 40% saw their share decline from roughly 16-17% to 13-14%. Real wages fell sharply in early 1980s and recovered only slowly, remaining below 1977 levels through most of the decade.

For our framework, the neoliberal restructuring demonstrates how elite used coup-created conditions to transform capitalism in their favor. The crushing of labor removed resistance to wage cuts, privatization, and elimination of worker protections. The restructuring enriched those already wealthy—business groups acquired state assets, landowners mechanized using cheap credit, and financial elites profited from deregulation. Workers and peasants bore the costs through unemployment, falling real wages, and elimination of social protections.

The pattern matches global neoliberal turn in the 1980s—Thatcher's Britain, Reagan's America, Pinochet's Chile. In each case, crushing labor (through legal changes in Britain/America, through coups in Chile/Turkey) enabled economic restructuring that benefited capital at labor's expense. Turkey's experience was part of global capitalist transformation using state violence to impose market discipline on workers.

IX. ASSESSMENT: 1923-1980 CONTINUITY AND TRANSFORMATION

What Changed Over 57 Years?

Turkey in 1980 was dramatically different from Turkey in 1923 in many measurable ways. The differences represent genuine transformations that improved many lives while maintaining fundamental hierarchies.

Population and urbanization: Turkey's population grew from roughly 13 million (1923) to 44 million (1980). Urbanization increased from perhaps 20-25% to roughly 44%. Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir became major cities with millions of residents. This demographic shift transformed social structure—Turkey became increasingly urban, industrial society rather than predominantly agricultural.

Literacy and education: Literacy increased from roughly 10-15% (1923) to over 60% (1980). Primary education became nearly universal. Secondary and university education expanded dramatically. This created educated middle class and transformed cultural life. Access to information increased, enabling political participation and economic advancement for millions.

Industrial development: Turkey developed substantial industrial base. Manufacturing contributed roughly 20-25% of GDP by 1980 (vs. perhaps 5-10% in 1923). Turkey produced textiles, automotive products, consumer goods, cement, steel, and chemicals. The economy diversified beyond agriculture, creating industrial working class numbering millions.

Infrastructure: Turkey built extensive road networks, railways, ports, airports, dams, and power plants. Electricity reached most areas (vs. minimal coverage in 1923). Communications improved—telephone, radio, and television connected populations. Infrastructure enabled economic development and integrated the national economy.

Women's status: Women gained legal equality, voting rights, access to education and professions. Female literacy increased from perhaps 5% to over 50%. Women entered workforce in growing numbers, particularly in cities. These were genuine advances, though gender inequality persisted in practice and was extreme in rural areas.

Health: Life expectancy increased from roughly 35-40 years to 58-60 years. Infant mortality declined from over 300 per 1000 to roughly 110 per 1000. These improvements reflected better nutrition, sanitation, and medical care. Millions of lives were saved and extended.

These transformations were real, substantial, and consequential. Turkey in 1980 was developed, urbanized, literate society dramatically different from the Ottoman Empire's ruins in 1923. The Kemalist modernization project achieved many of its stated goals.

What Persisted: The Three Monopolies

Despite these transformations, the fundamental structure of elite power persisted across 57 years. The three monopolies remained concentrated, though their specific forms evolved.

Wealth monopoly:

Land ownership remained highly concentrated throughout the period. The failure of land reform meant large estates persisted. Data from 1963 agricultural census showed roughly 65% of agricultural land in holdings over 100 hectares owned by less than 5% of families. By 1980, concentration had increased—mechanization enabled larger operations while small holders were displaced.

Industrial capital was even more concentrated. The major business groups—Koç, Sabancı, and others—controlled vast empires spanning manufacturing, finance, trade, and services. These groups emerged through state support, protected markets, and connections rather than pure market competition. The top 10 business families probably controlled 30-40% of industrial capital by 1980.

Wealth inequality, measured by Gini coefficient, remained high—roughly 0.50-0.52 in early 1960s, increasing to 0.57-0.58 by 1980. Turkey was more unequal than Western European social democracies and comparable to Latin American countries with similar histories of concentrated land ownership.

Income distribution similarly showed high inequality. The top 10% captured 35-40% of total income throughout the period (increasing to 40%+ by 1980). The bottom 40% received only 12-15% of income. Working-class and peasant families lived at subsistence or near-subsistence despite overall economic growth.

Violence monopoly:

The state's monopoly on organized violence remained absolute and was used repeatedly to suppress challenges. The pattern across 57 years was consistent:

- Kurdish rebellions (1925, 1930, 1937-38) crushed through overwhelming military force
- Labor organizing suppressed through legal restrictions and, when necessary, police violence
- Leftist movements destroyed through 1971 and 1980 repressions
- Political opposition constrained by military interventions (1960, 1971, 1980) when it exceeded acceptable boundaries

The military's role as ultimate political authority was formalized by 1980. Three successful coups demonstrated that civilian politics operated within military-defined boundaries. Democracy was real but constrained—parties could compete, elections occurred, power transferred, but certain outcomes (genuine land reform, labor power, Kurdish rights, socialist transformation) were prevented by military as guardian of elite interests.

Police and paramilitary forces maintained order in ways that protected property and suppressed resistance. The Grey Wolves' violence against leftists in 1970s, tolerated or enabled by state, demonstrated how violence monopoly could be delegated to private forces when convenient. The pattern echoed Ottoman use of Kurdish irregulars against Armenians—official state forces supplemented by irregular forces targeting enemies, creating deniability while achieving suppression.

Information monopoly:

This was most contested monopoly, reflecting genuine democratization and education expansion. By 1980, diverse media existed, literacy was widespread, universities educated hundreds of thousands, and information circulation was substantial compared to 1923.

But control persisted through several mechanisms:

- State controlled television and radio broadcasting (monopoly until 1990s)
- Censorship remained extensive—books, films, publications were banned routinely
- Universities were state-controlled and subject to purges (especially after 1971, 1980)
- Education taught Kemalist ideology as mandatory curriculum
- Military and civilian courts prosecuted "thought crimes"—expressing certain ideas was criminal
- Torture and imprisonment of intellectuals created self-censorship

The 1980 coup particularly demonstrated information control. Over 300,000 books were destroyed, journalists were arrested, newspapers were closed, academics were fired, and cultural production was censored. This wholesale assault on independent thought demonstrated that information freedom existed only within boundaries elite deemed acceptable.

Elite Composition: Continuity and Circulation

The specific families and individuals comprising the elite changed somewhat over 57 years, but the class character remained constant. Three patterns characterize elite composition:

Continuity of major families: Some ayan families who supported Kemal in the 1920s remained elite through 1980. Families who acquired land through late Ottoman appropriations or through confiscated minority properties maintained their holdings across generations. The Koç and Sabancı families, rising from commercial success in Ottoman/early Republican periods, became industrial dynasties. Large landowner families in regions like Çukurova and Aegean maintained estates across decades.

Upward mobility through state service: Military officers, high bureaucrats, and professionals could rise into elite through careers. Successful officers became politicians (Kemal himself, Evren, others). Bureaucrats accumulated wealth through corruption and connections. Professionals (doctors, lawyers, engineers) joined middle/upper classes. But this mobility reinforced the system—those who rose through state service supported state power and property rights.

Exclusion of workers and peasants: The working class and peasantry remained excluded from elite throughout the period. No significant political movement successfully brought workers or peasants into power. Strikes won concessions but didn't fundamentally shift power. Land reform's failure meant peasants remained subordinate. The 1980 coup crushed the labor movement that had briefly challenged elite power.

Did Democracy Change Fundamental Power Relations?

Turkey's transition from single-party dictatorship (1923-1946) to multi-party democracy (1946-1960, 1961-1980 with military interruptions) represents genuine political change. Elections were competitive, parties alternated in power, opposition could organize (within limits), and democratic norms developed. This was not mere theater—democracy was real.

But democracy operated within constraints that prevented challenging elite power:

Electoral boundaries: Both major parties (CHP and AP/DP) were elite-led and elite-dominated. Workers and peasants could vote but couldn't organize autonomous political movements that threatened property. When the left (TİP) emerged in 1960s offering genuine alternative, it was crushed.

Military oversight: Three coups demonstrated that democracy was conditional. The military intervened when civilian politics threatened Kemalist principles (meaning elite interests). Democratic governments operated knowing military could intervene—this constrained policy choices even without overt intervention.

Economic power: Concentrated wealth translated into political power. Business groups funded parties, influenced policy through lobbying, and used media ownership to shape discourse. Landowners controlled rural votes through patronage and dependence. Concentrated economic power meant democracy couldn't overcome elite interests even when majorities voted for change.

Violence capacity: Elite retained monopoly on organized violence. This meant resistance could always be suppressed when necessary. The 1980 coup demonstrated this decisively—labor organizing that threatened profits, leftist movements that threatened capitalism, all crushed through overwhelming force.

The pattern suggests that democracy in capitalist society with extreme inequality cannot fundamentally redistribute power. Elite tolerate democracy when it serves legitimacy functions and enables competition among elite fractions, but use violence when democracy threatens property. This is not unique to Turkey—it's characteristic of capitalist democracy generally, but Turkey's extreme inequality and military interventions make the pattern particularly visible.

Conclusion: Adaptation Through Successive Crises

From 1923-1980, Turkish elites adapted through:

- Transition from empire to republic (1923)
- Single-party to multi-party democracy (1946-1950)
- Multiple military coups (1960, 1971, 1980)
- Economic model shifts (étatism to liberalization to neoliberalism)
- Political party changes (CHP dominance to AP/DP to coalition instability)

Through all these transformations, elite maintained control of wealth, violence, and information. The specific individuals and families changed partially, elite fractions competed, and institutional forms evolved. But the fundamental structure persisted—small elite controlling productive assets and using state violence to maintain domination over workers and peasants.

The 1980 coup represents the clearest example of elite power consolidation in the face of challenge. When labor organizing threatened to redistribute power, when leftist politics offered alternatives to capitalism, and when economic crisis created opportunity for transformation—elite used violence monopoly decisively to crush resistance and restructure economy in their favor.

This pattern extends across 681 years (1299-1980) now documented. From Ottoman beylik through imperial expansion, decline, reform, revolution, and republic—elite power persisted

through adaptation. The 1980s and beyond (Part 4) will show whether this pattern continues into contemporary Turkey or whether fundamental transformation finally breaks elite power.

Part 3 Complete (Sections 1-2, ~28,000 words total covering 1923-1980)

Coverage:

- 1960s: Rise of labor organizing and TİP (socialist party), but military intervened 1971
- 1971 "coup by memorandum": Systematic repression of left, labor movement weakened
- 1970s: Left-right violence (5,000+ deaths), economic crisis, political instability
- 1980 coup: Massive repression (650,000 detained, 50 executed, 300+ died under torture)
- Labor crushed: Union membership halved, DİSK leaders imprisoned, strikes prohibited
- 1982 Constitution: Institutionalized military oversight, restricted labor rights
- Neoliberal restructuring: Özal's liberalization benefited elite, crushed workers
- Assessment 1923-1980: Three monopolies persisted through all transformations

The Answer (Extended): 681 years (1299-1980): Elite adapted through empire-to-republic transformation, single-party to multi-party democracy, three military coups, and neoliberal restructuring—maintaining control of wealth, violence, and information throughout.

Next: Part 4 covering 1980-2025 (Özal era, military withdrawal from politics, AKP rise, Erdoğan autocracy, Syrian refugees, contemporary wealth concentration) to complete the full 726-year analysis.

TURKEY CASE STUDY - PART 4

From Ottoman Empire to Turkish Republic (1299-2025)

Neoliberalism, Islamic Politics, and Contemporary Autocracy (1980-2025)

PROLOGUE: A BUSINESS EMPIRE'S ADAPTATION

Istanbul, June 2023

Mehmet Koç IV stood in the headquarters of Koç Holding, Turkey's largest business conglomerate, reviewing quarterly results with senior executives. The family empire his great-grandfather had built spanned automotive manufacturing, consumer durables, energy, finance, retail, and tourism. Koç Holding employed over 80,000 people, had annual revenues exceeding $50 billion, and represented perhaps 8-10% of Turkey's entire GDP.

His great-grandfather had started as a small trader in late Ottoman Ankara, prospered during the early Republic through connections and state contracts, and built an industrial empire during the import substitution era. His grandfather had navigated the military coups and political instability of the 1960s-1970s. His father had thrived during Özal's liberalization and privatization in the 1980s-1990s, acquiring state enterprises at favorable prices and expanding into finance and energy.

Now Mehmet faced different challenges. The AKP government under Recep Tayyip Erdoğan had ruled for twenty-one years, transforming Turkey's politics, economy, and society. The relationship between old secular business elite (like Koç) and the Islamist-rooted AKP had been fraught—sometimes cooperative, sometimes antagonistic, always transactional.

The AKP had cultivated new business elite—the "Anatolian Tigers," provincial industrialists from conservative religious backgrounds who owed their rise to AKP patronage. These newcomers competed with established groups like Koç, creating tension. When the 2013 Gezi Park protests erupted, some Koç properties sheltered protesters, angering Erdoğan. The government retaliated with tax investigations and regulatory harassment. But the families negotiated—Koç made public statements supporting the government, increased charitable contributions to AKP-aligned foundations, and the harassment eased.

This was how elite families survived—flexibility, pragmatism, and understanding that politics changed while capital endured. The Koç family had prospered under Kemalist secularists, under military regimes, under center-right coalitions, and now under Islamist populists. The rhetoric changed—from Kemalist nationalism to European integration to neo-Ottomanism to conservative Islam—but the fundamental relationship remained. The government needed

business to generate growth, employment, and tax revenue. Business needed government for contracts, regulations, and protection of property.

Mehmet reviewed the challenges. Inflation was high (officially 40%, realistically 70%+), the lira was collapsing, interest rates were negative in real terms, capital was fleeing, and the economy was crisis-prone. But Koç Holding was adapting—shifting assets to hard currency, investing in exports, partnering with international firms, and maintaining relationships with all political factions.

The Syrian refugee crisis had brought 3.6 million refugees, depressing wages and providing cheap labor for manufacturing. Kurdish conflict had intensified periodically, requiring delicate balancing between government anti-terrorism policies and business interests in southeastern Turkey. Erdoğan's increasing authoritarianism—jailing journalists, crushing opposition, controlling judiciary—created uncertainty but also opportunity for those who maintained good relations with the government.

Looking over the Bosphorus from the executive suite, Mehmet reflected on the patterns his family had navigated across nearly a century. The Ottoman Empire had collapsed. The Republic had emerged. Single-party rule had given way to democracy. Military had intervened repeatedly. Economic models had shifted from étatism to import substitution to neoliberalism. Kemalist secularism had been challenged by Islamic politics. But through all these transformations, the Koç family had maintained and expanded their wealth.

How? By understanding that elite power doesn't depend on specific political forms or ideologies but on owning productive assets and maintaining relationships with whoever controls state violence. The Kemalists protected property. The military protected property. The AKP protects property. The rhetoric changes—modernization, development, conservative values, neo-Ottoman greatness—but property rights remain sacrosanct.

Wealth concentration in Turkey today was extreme—the top 10% controlled roughly 70% of wealth, the top 1% controlled perhaps 45%. The Gini coefficient was 0.62-0.65, among the highest in OECD countries. But this wasn't new—it was continuity. The Ottoman ayan had controlled similar proportions. The early Republican elite had controlled similar proportions. The neoliberal restructuring had increased concentration. And the AKP era, despite populist rhetoric, had maintained it.

The violence monopoly? The state controlled it absolutely. Whether military coups or Erdoğan's purges, the pattern was identical—overwhelming force suppressed resistance. The PKK insurgency had killed 40,000+ over decades, demonstrating both Kurdish persistence and state's willingness to use massive violence. The 2016 coup attempt and subsequent purges had eliminated 150,000+ people from state positions. Violence monopoly was as concentrated as ever.

Information control? More complex. The internet and social media created information flows harder to control than state TV monopolies. But the government had adapted—jailing

journalists, blocking websites, controlling traditional media through ownership by government-aligned conglomerates, and using legal prosecution to silence critics. Thousands of people were imprisoned for "insulting the president" or "terrorist propaganda." Information wasn't monopolized like in 1960, but it was heavily controlled.

Mehmet's children were being educated at elite universities abroad, spoke multiple languages, and would inherit the empire. They would adapt to whatever came next—military coup, democratic transition, authoritarian deepening, economic crisis, geopolitical realignment. Elite survival required this flexibility, this willingness to work with any regime that protected property.

The Republic's first century (1923-2023) had seen extraordinary transformations. But looking at who owned what, who commanded force, and who controlled information—the fundamental structure was remarkably stable. Different elite fractions rose and fell. New families joined the elite while some old families declined. But the class structure—small elite controlling wealth and power, large majority working for subsistence, state violence protecting elite interests—persisted across every transformation.

As the meeting concluded, Mehmet approved the quarterly dividend distribution to family shareholders. The empire would endure. It always had.

I. THE ÖZAL ERA: NEOLIBERAL CONSOLIDATION (1983-1993)

From Military Rule to Civilian Government

The 1983 elections, held under military oversight with restrictions on parties and candidates, brought Turgut Özal's Motherland Party (ANAP) to power with 45.1% of votes and strong parliamentary majority. The military had expected the Nationalist Democracy Party (its preferred vehicle) to win, but voters chose Özal—a technocrat who had implemented economic liberalization under military rule and promised continued reform without military domination.

Özal's background exemplified the new Turkish elite. Born 1927 to middle-class family in Malatya, educated as electrical engineer, worked in public sector and private industry, studied in America, embraced free-market ideology, and served as undersecretary of the State Planning Organization before becoming architect of the January 24, 1980 decisions. He was simultaneously modernizer and pious Muslim, technocrat and populist, pro-Western and nationalist—embodying contradictions that would characterize Turkish politics.

The transition from military to civilian rule occurred gradually. Kenan Evren remained president until 1989, maintaining military oversight through National Security Council. The 1982 Constitution's restrictions on politics remained—previous political leaders were banned, labor

organizing was constrained, media was controlled. But civilian politics resumed—parliament debated, opposition parties operated (within limits), and elections determined governments.

Özal's governance style was personalistic and authoritarian despite democratic forms. He concentrated power, made decisions with small circle of advisors, bypassed parliament through decree powers, and intimidated opposition. But he was also pragmatic and transactional—willing to make deals, co-opt opponents, and reverse policies when necessary. This flexibility enabled him to implement dramatic economic transformations while maintaining political control.

The military gradually withdrew from direct politics but maintained guardian role. It intervened in 1993 (forcing government resignation over Kurdish policy) and 1997 ("post-modern coup" removing Islamist-led government), demonstrating that civilian rule was conditional. But the era of direct military coups appeared to be ending—economic development, European integration aspirations, and international pressure made coups less acceptable. The military's power persisted but took subtler forms.

For our framework, the Özal era represents elite adaptation to post-coup conditions. The military had crushed labor and left, creating conditions for neoliberal restructuring. Özal implemented this restructuring through civilian government, providing democratic legitimacy while maintaining authoritarian control. Elite power was preserved through new forms—market discipline replaced military repression as primary control mechanism, though violence capacity remained available when needed.

Privatization and Wealth Concentration

Özal's economic program accelerated privatization that had begun cautiously under military rule. Understanding the privatization process reveals how elite appropriated state assets and concentrated wealth.

The State Enterprises Reform Law (1984) and Privatization Law (1986) established legal framework. State enterprises in manufacturing, mining, telecommunications, banking, and energy were designated for sale. The stated goals were increasing efficiency, reducing state fiscal burden, developing capital markets, and broadening ownership. The actual result was transferring wealth from public to connected private hands.

The privatization process favored existing business groups. Sales occurred through methods ensuring large groups could acquire assets—block sales to strategic investors, favorable financing terms, and limited competition. Small investors were excluded or marginalized. The result was that Koç, Sabancı, and other major holdings acquired state enterprises at prices below market value.

Examples of major privatizations:

- TÜPRAŞ (petroleum refining): Sold to Koç Group 2005 for $4.1 billion, creating monopoly in refining
- Türk Telekom (telecommunications): Privatized to consortium including Saudi Oger for $6.6 billion in 2005
- Erdemir (steel): Privatized to Oyak Group (military pension fund) in 2006
- Numerous banks, factories, mines sold throughout 1980s-2000s

The privatizations enriched those already wealthy. Business groups acquired profitable enterprises and natural monopolies. Connected individuals purchased assets and resold at profits. Foreign investors partnered with Turkish groups, providing capital but sharing control. The state received revenues that were often lower than assets' long-term value, while private buyers gained cash-generating businesses.

Labor bore costs. Privatization meant layoffs, wage cuts, and elimination of job security. State enterprise workers had enjoyed relatively good wages and benefits. Private owners reduced costs by cutting labor. Union membership declined further—from already-depressed post-1980 levels to even lower rates. Real wages stagnated or fell for most workers even as owners enriched.

Wealth inequality increased dramatically. Data shows:

- Gini coefficient: 0.43 (1987) → 0.49 (2000), continuing upward trajectory
- Share of income to top 10%: 38% (1987) → 42% (2000)
- Share of income to bottom 40%: 14% (1987) → 12% (2000)

The privatization period saw emergence of billionaires. The first Turkish billionaires appeared in 1990s—individuals who had acquired businesses through privatization, connections, or monopolies. By 2000, Turkey had roughly 10-15 billionaires (estimates vary). By 2023, that number would exceed 30, with combined wealth over $80 billion.

For our framework, privatization demonstrates how elite use state power to appropriate wealth while calling it "free market reform." The state created these enterprises using public resources. When they became profitable, they were sold to private elite at discounted prices. The surplus those enterprises generated, which had been public revenue, became private profit. This was wealth transfer from public to private, from workers and taxpayers to elite, legitimized through market ideology.

Export-Oriented Growth and Integration

Özal's economic model shifted Turkey from import substitution to export-oriented growth, integrating Turkey into global capitalism in new ways. Understanding this integration reveals both opportunities and subordination.

Export promotion through currency devaluation, subsidies, and trade agreements increased exports dramatically. Turkish exports grew from roughly $3 billion (1980) to $15 billion (1990) to

$27 billion (2000). Textiles, clothing, automotive parts, and agricultural products became major exports. Turkey became manufacturing platform for European markets.

But export growth didn't transform Turkey's position in global capitalism. Turkish exports were primarily labor-intensive manufactures using imported inputs and technology. Value was added through cheap labor, not through innovation or high-technology production. Turkey remained in middle of global value chains—above purely resource-extracting economies but below advanced manufacturing and technology leaders.

Foreign direct investment (FDI) increased, particularly in manufacturing assembly, finance, and later in services. Multinational corporations established operations, often joint ventures with Turkish groups. This brought capital, technology, and market access. But it also created dependency—technology remained foreign-owned, profits were repatriated, and Turkish partners were junior.

Financial integration proceeded rapidly. Capital controls were lifted, allowing free flow of investment. Istanbul Stock Exchange grew dramatically. Foreign portfolio investment surged. But liberalized capital flows created volatility—hot money flowed in during booms and fled during crises. Turkey became vulnerable to international financial movements beyond its control.

The 1994 financial crisis demonstrated these vulnerabilities. Massive capital outflow, currency collapse (lira lost ~70% of value), stock market crash, banking crisis, and severe recession followed. The crisis was caused by unsustainable current account deficits, excessive foreign borrowing, and speculative attacks. It was resolved through IMF intervention, austerity measures, and bailouts—but at enormous social cost. Real wages fell 20-30%, unemployment surged, and poverty increased.

Regional integration through customs union with EU (1996) opened Turkish markets to European goods while providing Turkish exporters access to EU markets. This benefited large exporters and European companies selling in Turkey. But it harmed small Turkish producers facing European competition and limited Turkey's ability to protect infant industries.

For our framework, the export-oriented model integrated Turkey into global capitalism but in subordinate position. Turkish economy became dependent on foreign capital, technology, and markets. Economic sovereignty was limited—crises were resolved through IMF programs, capital flows determined growth, and European markets dominated exports. Elite benefited through integration—exporters and importers gained, financial elite profited from capital flows, and foreign partnerships enriched connected groups. Workers faced downward wage pressure from global competition and vulnerability to international crises.

II. THE KURDISH CONFLICT: VIOLENCE AND SUPPRESSION (1984-PRESENT)

The PKK Insurgency

The Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), founded 1978 by Abdullah Öcalan and colleagues, launched armed insurgency in August 1984 with attacks on military targets in southeastern Turkey. Understanding the conflict's scale and character reveals the violence monopoly's application to ethnic resistance.

The PKK's ideology combined Marxist-Leninism with Kurdish nationalism. It sought independent socialist Kurdish state initially, later moderating to demands for autonomy and cultural rights. Its support base was Kurdish peasants in southeastern Turkey, urban Kurdish workers, and Kurdish diaspora in Europe. At peak, PKK probably numbered 10,000-15,000 armed fighters with much larger support network.

The conflict's violence was enormous. From 1984-present, estimated 40,000+ people have died—PKK fighters, Turkish soldiers and police, Kurdish and Turkish civilians. The fighting was brutal on both sides—PKK conducted ambushes, bombings, and assassinations; Turkish military conducted counterinsurgency including village destructions, forced displacement, and extrajudicial killings.

The state's response was overwhelming military force combined with denial of Kurdish identity. The military deployed hundreds of thousands of troops to southeastern regions. Villages suspected of supporting PKK were destroyed—estimates suggest 3,000-4,000 villages were depopulated, displacing 1-3 million Kurds. The displaced fled to cities or became internal refugees, creating humanitarian crisis.

The village guard system enlisted Kurdish tribes to fight PKK, creating proxy forces. Guards received weapons and wages, creating interest in conflict's continuation. This divided Kurdish communities—some joined guards for economic reasons or tribal rivalries, others supported or joined PKK, creating Kurdish-on-Kurdish violence.

Torture, disappearances, and extrajudicial killings were systematic. Human rights organizations documented thousands of cases—Kurdish activists arrested and tortured, suspected PKK members killed without trial, civilians caught in military operations. The state claimed necessity—fighting terrorism required harsh measures. But the systematic nature suggested policy rather than aberration.

Cultural suppression intensified. Kurdish language was banned in public (including education, media, political activity). Kurdish political parties were repeatedly banned for alleged PKK ties. Kurdish politicians, mayors, and activists were imprisoned. The state insisted there was no Kurdish identity—only "Mountain Turks" who needed to be integrated into Turkish identity.

Öcalan's capture in 1999 (seized by Turkish agents in Kenya after fleeing Syria) marked turning point. He was tried, sentenced to death (later commuted to life imprisonment), and has been imprisoned ever since. With leadership captured and military pressure intense, PKK declared ceasefires multiple times and moderated demands—no longer seeking independence but autonomy, cultural rights, and democratic reforms.

For our framework, the Kurdish conflict demonstrates violence monopoly's use for ethnic domination. The Turkish state, like Ottoman Empire suppressing Armenian and Greek populations, used overwhelming force to maintain Turkish dominance. The specific methods differed (counterinsurgency vs. genocide), but the function was identical—preventing ethnic minority from challenging state's national project.

The conflict also demonstrates elite coordination. Kurdish business owners, despite ethnic solidarity, largely supported the state because PKK threatened property and order. Turkish business operated in Kurdish regions under military protection. The military-industrial complex profited from conflict—defense spending, construction contracts, military supplies. Elite interests aligned with suppression even as ordinary Kurds and Turkish soldiers died.

Peace Process and Breakdown (2013-2015)

The AKP government under Erdoğan initiated peace process (çözüm süreci) in 2013, negotiating with imprisoned Öcalan and PKK leadership. This represented dramatic shift—the state acknowledging Kurdish issue existed and needed political solution rather than purely military approach.

The process included:

- Negotiations between intelligence officials and Öcalan
- PKK ceasefire and withdrawal of fighters from Turkey to northern Iraq
- Modest reforms: limited Kurdish language education, Kurdish given minor status
- Public dialogue about Kurdish rights and identity

The process raised hopes for ending conflict. Violence decreased dramatically during ceasefire. Kurdish regions experienced relative peace. Economic activity increased. Some Kurdish fighters surrendered. But the process was fragile, lacking institutional framework, transparency, or clear endgame.

The process collapsed in 2015 following several factors:

- AKP lost parliamentary majority (June 2015 elections) partly due to Kurdish HDP party winning seats
- ISIS attacks in Turkey (Suruç bombing killed 33 leftist activists heading to help rebuild Kobane)
- Erdoğan's political calculation that nationalist mobilization would regain electoral support
- Resumption of violence after two Turkish police were killed, blamed on PKK

The post-2015 violence was even more intense than previous phases. Turkish military conducted operations in southeastern cities, using tanks and artillery in urban areas. Entire neighborhoods in cities like Cizre, Sur, and Nusaybin were destroyed. Civilians were trapped in combat zones, with hundreds killed. Curfews lasted months. The destruction was catastrophic—historical districts were demolished, infrastructure was destroyed, populations were displaced.

The government also cracked down on Kurdish political activity. HDP leaders and MPs were arrested on terrorism charges. Dozens of elected Kurdish mayors were removed and replaced with government-appointed trustees. Kurdish media outlets were closed. Thousands of Kurdish activists, lawyers, journalists, and politicians were imprisoned. The crackdown went beyond PKK to target any Kurdish political expression.

For our framework, the peace process's failure demonstrates elite unwillingness to genuinely share power with subordinate groups when doing so threatens control. The AKP initiated negotiations from position of strength, hoping to pacify conflict without fundamental concessions. When Kurdish political mobilization (through legal party HDP winning seats) threatened to shift power, the process was abandoned and violence resumed.

The pattern is consistent across 726 years: elite make concessions when forced by resistance but reverse them when possible. Ottoman Tanzimat reforms promising equality were never fully implemented. Republican promises of land reform were betrayed. The Kurdish peace process followed the same pattern—promises made under pressure, abandoned when elite interests dictated.

III. THE AKP RISE: ISLAMIC POLITICS AND ELITE TRANSFORMATION (2002-2013)

The 2002 Election and AKP Victory

The November 2002 elections brought the Justice and Development Party (AKP) to power with 34.3% of votes but, due to electoral system and other parties falling below 10% threshold, two-thirds of parliamentary seats. This was political earthquake—a party with Islamist roots swept to power after decade of military-led secular establishment marginalizing political Islam.

The AKP's emergence must be understood in context. Its founders—Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Abdullah Gül, Bülent Arınç, and others—came from the political Islam tradition (National Outlook movement, Welfare Party, Virtue Party). Previous Islamist parties had been banned by military-judiciary alliance for threatening secularism. The 1997 "post-modern coup" had forced Islamist-led government from power through military pressure, demonstrating limits on Islamic politics.

But the AKP learned. Instead of explicitly Islamist platform, it presented itself as "conservative democrat"—pro-market, pro-EU integration, supportive of democracy and rule of law, respecting religious freedom while accepting secular constitution. It distanced itself from radical Islam, reassured military and secular elite, and attracted diverse voters—pious conservatives, Kurdish voters seeking rights, liberals hoping for EU reforms, and business groups wanting economic stability.

The AKP's voter base was:

- Religious conservatives in Anatolian heartland who felt marginalized by secular elite
- Anatolian bourgeoisie ("Tigers")—provincial businessmen from religious backgrounds who resented Istanbul-based secular elite's dominance
- Kurdish voters hoping AKP would grant rights denied by secular nationalist parties
- Liberal intellectuals and professionals who saw AKP as vehicle for democratization and EU integration
- Urban poor benefiting from AKP's social services and clientelism

The electoral victory was also protest vote against establishment parties. Economic crisis (2001) had devastated Turkey—currency collapse, banking crisis, recession, mass unemployment. IMF imposed harsh austerity. Established parties were blamed for corruption and mismanagement. Voters wanted change—AKP provided alternative.

For our framework, the AKP's rise represents elite faction shift rather than elite replacement. The secular Kemalist elite who had dominated since Republic's founding faced challenge from religious conservative elite. But both factions represented capital—secular elite controlled established business groups and state, religious elite controlled emerging Anatolian business and provincial power bases. The competition was among elite fractions, not between elite and masses.

Economic Growth and Selective Redistribution (2002-2008)

The AKP's first term brought impressive economic growth. GDP grew roughly 7-8% annually 2002-2007. Inflation declined from 45% (2002) to single digits. FDI increased dramatically. Construction boomed. Infrastructure expanded. Living standards improved for many.

The growth had several sources:

- Global economic boom (pre-2008 crisis) with cheap credit flowing to emerging markets
- IMF program implemented after 2001 crisis creating macroeconomic stability
- Privatization continuing (with revenues boosting budget)
- Banking sector reform and credit expansion
- Construction boom creating employment
- EU accession process encouraging reforms and investment

But the growth was uneven and fragile. Benefits concentrated among:

- Large business groups (both secular and Anatolian Tigers)
- Construction sector and related industries
- Finance sector profiting from credit expansion
- Urban middle classes with access to credit
- Public sector employees receiving real wage increases

The costs and vulnerabilities:

- Current account deficits growing (Turkey importing more than exporting)
- Foreign debt increasing (government and private sector borrowing externally)
- Growth dependent on foreign capital inflows (vulnerable to sentiment shifts)
- Manufacturing sector not transforming to high-value production
- Agriculture declining with rural-urban migration accelerating
- Inequality remaining high despite poverty reduction

The AKP implemented selective redistribution that built political loyalty without challenging elite interests:

- Social assistance programs (food aid, coal distribution, health subsidies) targeting AKP constituencies
- Construction of hospitals, schools, infrastructure in previously neglected regions
- Expanded health insurance covering more population
- Housing programs (TOKİ) building affordable housing units

But these programs were:

- Clientelistic—distributed through party networks, building dependence on AKP
- Means-tested and conditional—not universal rights
- Funded partly through privatization revenues (selling assets to fund consumption)
- Small relative to overall inequality (not redistributive taxation or wealth transfers)

Labor policy remained anti-union. Despite AKP's initial rhetoric about democracy and rights, labor organizing faced continued restrictions. Strikes were prohibited in many sectors, union pluralism limited, and labor inspections minimal. The AKP served business interests by maintaining cheap, controlled labor.

For our framework, the AKP's economic policy demonstrates how populist rhetoric can coexist with elite interests. Social programs helped poor but didn't challenge wealth concentration. Growth enriched elite while spreading some benefits to middle and working classes. The fundamental structure—concentrated wealth, limited labor power, capital-friendly policies—persisted despite party's Islamic and populist identity.

The Gülen Alliance and Elite Power-Sharing

The AKP's consolidation of power involved alliance with Fethullah Gülen movement—a Islamic network combining religious education, business associations, media outlets, and presence in

state bureaucracy (particularly judiciary and police). Understanding this alliance and its breakdown reveals intra-elite competition.

Gülen, a Turkish Islamic scholar in self-imposed exile in Pennsylvania since 1999, led movement with millions of sympathizers globally and tens of thousands of committed followers in Turkey. The movement operated schools, universities, media companies (Zaman newspaper, STV television), business associations, and allegedly had members in judiciary, police, and military.

The AKP-Gülen alliance (2002-2013) served mutual interests:

- Gülenists gained political protection and expanded influence in state institutions
- AKP used Gülenist networks in judiciary/police to weaken military's power
- Both sought to reduce Kemalist secular elite's dominance
- Both opposed military interventionism and wanted civilian supremacy

The alliance enabled purges of military. The Ergenekon trials (2008-2013) and Sledgehammer trials prosecuted hundreds of military officers, journalists, and academics for allegedly plotting coups. Many convictions were based on dubious evidence, likely fabricated by Gülenist police and prosecutors. The trials were politicized—targeting AKP opponents rather than genuine coup plotters.

But the trials served purpose—they broke military's political power. Senior generals were imprisoned, military command was purged, and institutional capacity to intervene was destroyed. By 2013, the military was subordinated to civilian (AKP) authority for first time in Republican history. This was presented as democratization—civilian control over military. But it was actually shifting power from one elite fraction (military) to another (AKP and Gülenists).

The alliance broke down in 2013-2014 for several reasons:

- Competition for state positions and resources
- Erdoğan's growing authoritarianism threatening Gülenist interests
- Corruption investigations targeting AKP ministers' sons and Erdoğan's circle (December 2013), allegedly orchestrated by Gülenist police and prosecutors
- Erdoğan's recognition that Gülenists were becoming autonomous power threatening his control

The breakdown led to Gülenists being labeled terrorist organization. Gülenist media was closed, businesses were seized, schools were shut down, and followers were purged from state positions. After the July 2016 coup attempt (blamed on Gülenists, though Gülen denied involvement), the purge intensified—150,000+ people dismissed from state jobs, 50,000+ arrested, businesses worth billions seized.

For our framework, the Gülen alliance demonstrates elite factions cooperating when interests align but competing ruthlessly when they diverge. The AKP and Gülenists allied to displace Kemalist elite, then fought for dominance. Both used state power—courts, police, media—to

attack opponents. The competition was among elite fractions controlling different resources (AKP controlled elected office and state budget, Gülenists controlled judiciary/police and business networks), not between elite and masses.

IV. AUTHORITARIAN CONSOLIDATION: ERDOĞAN'S POWER (2013-2025)

The Gezi Park Protests and Repression (2013)

The Gezi Park protests (May-June 2013) represented largest challenge to AKP rule. What began as environmental protest against park destruction in Istanbul became nationwide movement against authoritarianism. Understanding the protests and their suppression reveals elite response to mass mobilization.

The protests started when police violently evicted environmentalists occupying Gezi Park to prevent its destruction for shopping mall construction. The police violence—tear gas, water cannons, beatings—was broadcast widely, triggering outrage. Within days, hundreds of thousands protested in Istanbul, Ankara, and dozens of cities.

The protests were diverse—environmentalists, secularists, leftists, Kurdish activists, LGBT groups, soccer fans, middle-class professionals. They united around opposition to AKP's authoritarianism, Erdoğan's arrogance, erosion of freedoms, and creeping Islamization of public life. The protests were largely peaceful, creative, and spontaneous—occupying public spaces, using social media for coordination, creating mini-democratic communities.

But they lacked organization, leadership, clear demands, or capacity to transform into lasting political movement. When police violently cleared occupations after weeks of protest, the movement dissipated. Roughly 8,000 were injured in police violence, 11 were killed, and thousands were arrested. The government declared victory, blamed "foreign provocateurs" and "terrorists," and intensified repression.

The aftermath saw systematic crackdown on civil society. Protest organizers were prosecuted, NGOs were harassed, social media users were arrested for "insulting the president," and media critical of government were silenced. The protests radicalized Erdoğan—he concluded that compromise was weakness and that opposition must be crushed not negotiated with.

For our framework, Gezi represents mass mobilization's limits when elite controls violence monopoly. Millions could protest, but without organized force (military, armed groups) or sustained economic disruption (general strike), they couldn't compel change. Once elite decided to use violence, protests were crushed. The pattern echoes Ottoman and Republican history—mass resistance without capacity to challenge violence monopoly is suppressed when elite determines suppression serves their interests.

The Presidential System and Constitutional Changes (2017)

The April 2017 referendum narrowly approved (51.4%) constitutional changes transforming Turkey from parliamentary to presidential system. The changes consolidated power in presidency:

- President can issue decrees with force of law
- President appoints ministers, judges, and high officials without parliamentary approval
- Parliament's oversight powers reduced
- Judicial independence compromised through presidential appointment of judges

The referendum occurred under unfair conditions—opposition had limited media access, the government used state resources for "yes" campaign, and voting irregularities were reported. International observers noted the unfairness. But the result was accepted, completing Erdoğan's transformation from prime minister to executive president with few constraints.

The presidential system formalized what had been de facto reality—Erdoğan controlled Turkey through personal authority transcending institutions. Parliament rubber-stamped his decisions, judiciary ruled as he wished, media repeated his statements, and opposition was tolerated only if ineffective.

For our framework, the presidential system demonstrates institutional adaptation to personalist rule. Rather than governing through institutions, Erdoğan reshaped institutions to serve his power. The form remained democratic (elections, parliament, constitution) but substance was authoritarian. This pattern echoes Ottoman sultans who ruled through institutions (Divan, viziers) but held ultimate power—institutional forms provide legitimacy while actual power is personal.

The 2016 Coup Attempt and Purges

The July 15, 2016 coup attempt was dramatic—military units seized bridges in Istanbul and Ankara, tanks deployed, jets flew low over cities, and state TV was briefly occupied. But the coup was poorly planned, lacked coordination, and faced civilian resistance after Erdoğan called citizens to streets via FaceTime. By morning, the coup had failed, with roughly 250 dead (mostly civilians) and 2,000+ injured.

The government blamed Gülenists, claiming Gülenist officers executed the coup. Gülen denied involvement. The truth remains contested—were Gülenists responsible, or did the government exploit a genuine coup attempt for political purposes, or was it staged to justify purges? Evidence supports the first interpretation (Gülenist officers were involved), but the government's response exceeded any genuine security need.

The purges were massive and systematic:

- 150,000+ state employees dismissed (teachers, judges, police, civil servants, military)

- 50,000+ arrested, including military officers, judges, journalists, academics, businesspeople
- 200+ media outlets closed
- 1,500+ NGOs shut down
- Universities purged, academic freedom destroyed
- Businesses seized—holdings worth tens of billions appropriated

The purges targeted not just coup plotters but anyone associated with Gülen movement and opposition generally. Thousands of people lost jobs, freedom, or livelihoods on flimsy evidence—attending Gülen-linked schools decades earlier, having Gülen's books, or using ByLock (encrypted messaging app allegedly used by Gülenists but used by many others).

Emergency rule (state of emergency) declared after coup attempt lasted two years, suspending normal legal protections. Decrees issued under emergency rule had constitutional force, bypassing parliament. The emergency enabled authoritarian consolidation—opposition was labeled terrorists, dissent was criminalized, and loyalty to Erdoğan became requirement for state employment.

For our framework, the post-coup purges demonstrate violence monopoly's use for elite consolidation. Erdoğan used coup attempt to eliminate all opposition—not just Gülenists but secular opposition, Kurdish activists, leftists, and independent media. The purges removed 150,000+ people from positions, creating vacancies filled by loyalists. This was systematic use of state violence to ensure loyalty throughout state apparatus.

The pattern echoes Stalin's purges, Mao's Cultural Revolution, or Pinochet's repression—using crisis (real or manufactured) to eliminate opposition and ensure absolute control. The specific ideology differs (Islamic conservatism vs. communism vs. anti-communism), but the function is identical—consolidating power through systematic violence.

Economic Crisis and Authoritarian Neoliberalism (2018-2025)

Turkey's economy entered prolonged crisis from 2018 onward, with several overlapping problems:

Currency collapse: The lira lost 80%+ of value against dollar (2018-2023), destroyed savings in lira, made imports expensive, and increased foreign debt burden.

Inflation: Official inflation reached 85% (2022), though independent estimates suggested 150%+. Real inflation destroyed purchasing power, impoverished wage workers, and created social distress.

Unorthodox monetary policy: Erdoğan rejected conventional economics, insisting high interest rates cause inflation (opposite of economic consensus). He fired central bank governors who raised rates, appointed loyalists, and maintained negative real interest rates despite inflation. This heterodox policy scared investors and accelerated currency collapse.

Debt crisis: Corporate sector foreign debt exceeded $400 billion. With lira collapsing, debt servicing became impossible. The government provided currency swaps and support, socializing private losses while maintaining that markets should be free.

Capital flight: Wealthy Turks and foreign investors withdrew capital, bought foreign currency or gold, and transferred assets abroad. The government imposed restrictions but capital flight continued.

Despite crisis, elite prospered while workers suffered:

Elite adaptation: Wealthy families shifted assets to hard currency, real estate, gold, and foreign investments. They hedged against lira collapse. Some benefited from government contracts, particularly construction and infrastructure projects. AKP-aligned business groups received favorable treatment—contracts, credit access, protection from bankruptcy.

Worker immiseration: Real wages fell 20-30% due to inflation. Unemployment officially reached 13-14% (realistically higher). Informal employment expanded as formal sector contracted. Young people faced unemployment rates exceeding 25%. Workers took multiple jobs to survive.

Poverty expansion: Minimum wage fell below poverty line in real terms. Food prices increased dramatically. Middle-class families slipped into poverty. The poor became destitute. Informal settlements expanded as housing became unaffordable.

Wealth concentration increased: During crisis, the rich got richer while poor got poorer. The Gini coefficient increased from roughly 0.40-0.42 (2013) to 0.44-0.45 (2023). The top 1% controlled increasing share of wealth—perhaps 50-55% by 2023. Turkey had 30+ billionaires with combined wealth over $80 billion while millions lived in poverty.

The crisis demonstrates authoritarian neoliberalism—maintaining capitalist property relations and elite enrichment through authoritarian control when markets dysfunction and democratic legitimacy erodes. The government:

- Protected elite wealth while imposing austerity on workers
- Used state violence to suppress labor strikes and protests
- Manipulated statistics to minimize crisis appearance
- Blamed external enemies (US, EU, speculators) rather than acknowledging policy failures
- Maintained elite consumption (mega-projects, palaces, defense spending) while cutting social services

For our framework, the economic crisis reveals elite power's persistence through economic dysfunction. When capitalism fails to deliver growth, elite don't surrender power or redistribute wealth—they use authoritarian control to maintain hierarchy. The pattern matches historical examples: Late Ottoman Empire maintained elite power through economic decline; 1970s crisis

was resolved through military coup crushing labor; now Erdoğan maintains elite power through personalist authoritarianism.

V. CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES AND ELITE ADAPTATION (2015-2025)

The Syrian Refugee Crisis

Turkey hosts approximately 3.6 million Syrian refugees (2023), the world's largest refugee population. Understanding the refugee crisis's impact reveals how crisis serves elite interests while imposing costs on working classes.

Refugees fled Syrian civil war (from 2011), with peak arrivals 2014-2016. Turkey initially maintained open-border policy, expecting refugees would return quickly. When war continued, refugees became long-term presence. They settled in southern border cities (Gaziantep, Hatay, Kilis) and major cities (Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir).

The impacts were mixed and class-differentiated:

For elite/capital:

- Cheap labor supply: Refugees work informally for below-minimum wage, depressing wage levels
- Expanded markets: Refugees consume goods and services, creating demand
- International aid: European Union provided billions in aid for refugee support, some captured by Turkish government and contractors
- Political leverage: Turkey used refugees as bargaining chip with Europe—threatening to "open gates" unless EU provided concessions

For working class:

- Wage depression: Syrian labor willing to work for less drove down wages in construction, agriculture, textiles, services
- Housing competition: Refugees increased demand for cheap housing, driving up rents in poor neighborhoods
- Service strain: Schools, hospitals, infrastructure strained in areas with high refugee concentration
- Social tensions: Economic competition and cultural differences created resentment

For refugees:

- Exploitation: Working without legal protection, facing discrimination, earning subsistence wages
- Insecurity: Temporary protection status, vulnerable to deportation, lacking permanent residency
- Limited integration: Barriers to citizenship, education, formal employment
- Attacks: Periodic mob violence against refugees, particularly during economic hardship

The government's refugee policy served multiple interests:

- Erdoğan used refugees for Islamic humanitarian rhetoric, portraying Turkey as protector of Muslims
- Business benefited from cheap labor without legal protections
- European leverage—threatening refugee flows unless EU supported Turkey's demands
- Demographic engineering—settling refugees in Kurdish-majority areas, changing demographic balance

But costs fell on workers—Turkish and Syrian workers competed for low-wage jobs, driving down wages. The refugee crisis demonstrated how elite benefit from labor surpluses while workers bear costs of competition.

For our framework, the refugee crisis shows how humanitarian crises are mediated through class structure. Elite benefit (cheap labor, aid money, political leverage) while working classes compete and clash. The pattern is universal—immigration under capitalism benefits capital through labor surplus while creating working-class tensions. The Syrian refugee crisis is specific manifestation of this general pattern.

The Kurdish Political Crackdown

The post-2015 Kurdish crackdown intensified beyond previous repressions. Understanding its scale reveals authoritarian consolidation through ethnic targeting.

The HDP (Peoples' Democratic Party), Kurdish-led left party, won 13.1% in June 2015 elections (80 seats), preventing AKP majority. This success prompted crackdown:

Electoral manipulation: In November 2015 snap elections (called after coalition failed), violence and nationalist mobilization helped AKP regain majority. HDP's vote share fell to 10.8%.

Mass arrests: HDP's co-chairs Selahattin Demirtaş and Figen Yüksekdağ arrested (2016), along with dozens of HDP MPs. Demirtaş remains imprisoned despite European Court of Human Rights ruling his detention unlawful.

Mayor removals: Dozens of elected HDP mayors removed and replaced with government-appointed trustees. Municipalities in Kurdish regions now controlled by appointees, not elected officials.

Institutional destruction: HDP offices attacked, media outlets closed, activists imprisoned. The party functions but under severe restrictions.

The crackdown exceeded security rationales. Elected officials with no ties to PKK violence were imprisoned. Mayors implementing local governance were removed. The message was clear: Kurdish political participation is tolerated only if ineffective.

The crackdown also targeted Kurdish civil society—NGOs, media, cultural organizations. Thousands of Kurdish activists, journalists, and lawyers were imprisoned on terrorism charges with minimal evidence. The trials were unfair—secret witnesses, restricted defense access, politically-motivated judgments.

For our framework, the Kurdish crackdown demonstrates ethnic domination's persistence across regime types. Ottoman Empire suppressed Kurdish rebellions. Republican Turkey crushed Kurdish uprisings. Democratic Turkey imprisoned Kurdish politicians. Islamist AKP continues suppression. The regime type changes—empire, secular republic, Islamist democracy—but Kurdish subordination persists because elite define Turkish nation as excluding genuine Kurdish autonomy.

Media Control and Information Monopoly

Erdoğan's Turkey demonstrates how modern authoritarianism controls information without total monopoly. Understanding media control reveals adapted information monopoly.

The methods include:

Ownership: Pro-government business groups own major media—newspapers, TV channels, digital platforms. Doğan Media (opposition-aligned) was pressured through tax fines and regulatory harassment until sold to pro-government group (2018). Most mass media now supports government.

Legal persecution: Journalists prosecuted for "insulting president" (thousands of cases), "terrorist propaganda" (reporting on Kurds), or "coup support" (any critical coverage). Hundreds of journalists imprisoned—Turkey jails more journalists than any country globally.

Censorship: Internet censorship blocks websites, social media platforms, and content. Twitter, Facebook, YouTube faced periodic bans. VPN usage required to access blocked content. Wikipedia was blocked for years.

Self-censorship: Journalists know criticizing government means losing jobs, prosecution, or worse. Most self-censor, avoiding sensitive topics or framing coverage to avoid offense.

Disinformation: Pro-government media spreads propaganda, conspiracy theories, and disinformation. Opposition is labeled terrorists. Economic failures are blamed on foreign plots. Erdoğan is portrayed as heroic leader defending Turkey.

But control is incomplete:

Social media: Despite censorship, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram enable information circulation. Opposition uses social media to organize and communicate.

Independent media: Small independent outlets (websites, YouTube channels) operate despite harassment. They reach limited audiences but provide alternatives.

International media: Turkish diaspora and educated elites access foreign media. But this divides information environment—elite consuming international sources, masses consuming domestic propaganda.

Economic reality: Government can control narrative but can't control inflation destroying purchasing power. Economic crisis undermines propaganda's credibility.

For our framework, contemporary information control demonstrates adaptation to digital age. Complete monopoly (Ottoman ulema, early Republican state control) is impossible with internet and global media. But authoritarian regimes can control most information most people receive, creating parallel information universes where government supporters believe propaganda while opposition knows reality.

The implications: Democracy requires informed citizenry. When information is controlled, elections measure propaganda effectiveness not genuine preference. Turkish elections are competitive (opposition can win) but occur in manipulated information environment favoring government.

VI. FINAL ASSESSMENT: 726 YEARS OF ELITE POWER (1299-2025)

The Three Monopolies Across Seven Centuries

We can now definitively answer the central question: Did the Ottoman elite disappear, get replaced, or adapt when the empire collapsed and the Republic emerged—and has this pattern persisted through contemporary Turkey?

The answer: Elite adapted across every transformation—from Ottoman beylik to empire to decline to collapse to republic to democracy to military coups to neoliberalism to Islamic populism to authoritarian consolidation. The pattern is resilience through adaptation.

Let's review the three monopolies' continuity:

Wealth Monopoly: 1299-2025

1299-1600: Timar system concentrated land control among sipahi cavalry (50,000-80,000 holders) and Sultan's household. Tax farming enriched collectors. Slaves controlled trade and craft production. Top 5-10% controlled perhaps 60-70% of wealth.

1600-1800: Ayan provincial notables accumulated land through tax farms and malikane grants. Land ownership concentrated further. Christian merchant class emerged but subordinate. Top 5-10% controlled 60-80% of wealth.

1800-1923: Tanzimat land code (1858) enabled ayan to convert tax farms to legal ownership. Armenian and Greek commercial classes eliminated through genocide and expulsion (1915-1923). Their wealth appropriated by Muslim Turks. Top 5-10% controlled 65-75% of wealth.

1923-1980: Land reform failed—large estates persisted. Industrialization created business elite (Koç, Sabancı) through state support. Privatization began transferring state assets to private hands. Top 10% controlled 35-40% of income, Gini coefficient 0.50-0.57.

1980-2025: Neoliberal privatization transferred state assets to elite. Export-oriented growth enriched connected businesses. Anatolian Tigers emerged through AKP patronage. Financial crisis increased concentration. Top 10% control 70%+ of wealth, top 1% control 50-55%, Gini coefficient 0.62-0.65 (2023).

Pattern: Across 726 years, roughly 5-10% of population controlled 60-80% of wealth. The specific families changed (devşirme → ayan → Republican elite → neoliberal oligarchs), but concentration persisted. The mechanisms changed (timars → tax farms → legal ownership → corporate shares), but elite monopolized productive assets.

Violence Monopoly: 1299-2025

1299-1600: Janissaries (20,000-100,000) and sipahi cavalry maintained order. Rebellions crushed systematically. Celali uprisings killed tens of thousands. Sultan's violence monopoly absolute within controlled territories.

1600-1800: Janissaries became autonomous force, challenging sultans. Ayan maintained private armies. Violence monopoly fragmented but state retained superior force. Rebellions still crushed.

1800-1923: Janissaries destroyed (1826)—10,000-20,000 killed. New army created. Nationalist movements suppressed (Armenian genocide 1915-1917 killed 800,000-1,000,000). Kurdish rebellions crushed. Greek expulsion involved state-organized violence. State monopoly restored and used decisively.

1923-1980: Kurdish rebellions (1925, 1930, 1937-38) crushed—40,000-70,000 killed in Dersim alone. Military coups (1960, 1971, 1980) demonstrated ultimate authority. 1980 coup detained 650,000, killed 300+ under torture. Labor movement destroyed through violence.

1980-2025: PKK insurgency killed 40,000+ over decades. State used overwhelming force—village destructions, forced displacement, counterinsurgency. Gezi protests (2013) violently suppressed. 2016 coup attempt followed by purge of 150,000+. Violence monopoly remains absolute.

Pattern: Across 726 years, the state monopolized organized violence and used it to suppress resistance. The specific targets changed (Christians → leftists → Kurds), the institutions changed (Janissaries → Republican military → police state), but the function persisted—overwhelming force crushing challenges to elite power.

Information Monopoly: 1299-2025

1299-1600: Ulema controlled education through madrasas, provided religious legitimacy through fetvas, and monopolized literacy. Printing banned. Alternative ideologies suppressed.

1600-1800: Ulema monopoly continued. Printing gradually introduced but controlled. Access to information limited to elite.

1800-1923: Tanzimat created secular schools breaking ulema monopoly. But state controlled education and censored publications. Young Turk period saw press freedom briefly, then harsh censorship. Genocide denial began immediately.

1923-1980: Kemalist state monopolized education through secularization. State controlled radio/TV. Universities purged repeatedly (1971, 1980). Books destroyed, journalists jailed. Information more widely available than Ottoman era but state controlled most channels.

1980-2025: Media liberalization in 1990s created appearance of freedom. But 2000s brought increasing control—media ownership by pro-government groups, journalist imprisonment (Turkey leads globally), social media censorship. Information environment fractured—elite access alternatives, masses consume propaganda.

Pattern: Across 726 years, information control evolved from complete monopoly (ulema) to contested control (secular vs. religious, state vs. opposition). Modern autocracy can't achieve complete monopoly but controls most information most people receive. The function persists—preventing ideologies challenging elite power from spreading.

Elite Composition Across Centuries

The specific individuals and families comprising elite changed substantially across 726 years, but the class character persisted:

Ottoman period (1299-1923):

- Frontier warriors → devşirme slave-elite → ayan provincial notables → Tanzimat bureaucrats → Young Turk officers → Kemalist nationalists
- Families rarely persisted across entire period, but those who adapted survived

- Wealth derived from land control, tax farming, state positions, trade

Republican period (1923-2025):

- Kemalist military-bureaucratic elite → Democrat Party landowners/merchants → Military regimes → Özal neoliberals → AKP Islamists
- Some families persisted (Koç, Sabancı from late Ottoman through Republic)
- New families joined elite (Anatolian Tigers through AKP patronage)
- Wealth derived from land, industry, finance, state contracts, privatization

Continuity patterns:

1. **State service:** Military officers, bureaucrats could rise into elite across all periods
2. **Land ownership:** Families owning land persisted across generations when they adapted politically
3. **Commercial success:** Merchants and industrialists joined elite through state connections
4. **Political alignment:** Supporting winning factions enabled elite entry; opposing them meant elimination

Exclusion patterns:

1. **Workers:** Never achieved elite status through organizing—labor movements were crushed
2. **Peasants:** Land reform's failure meant peasants remained subordinate across all periods
3. **Ethnic minorities:** Christians eliminated through genocide/expulsion; Kurds suppressed continuously

The answer to "who held power":

1900: Ottoman military officers, ayan landowners, Christian merchants, bureaucrats, ulema

1930: Republican military officers, Kemalist bureaucrats, Turkish landowners (former ayan), emerging industrialists

1980: Military officers, industrialists (Koç, Sabancı), large landowners, technocrats, financial elite

2025: AKP politicians, Anatolian Tigers, old business groups (Koç, Sabancı), military (subordinated but powerful), financial elite

The specific individuals changed, but the class character persisted—small elite controlling productive assets and state power, using violence monopoly to suppress resistance, and employing ideology to legitimize domination.

Did Any Transformation Break Elite Power?

We can now evaluate whether any of the major transformations broke elite power or genuinely redistributed wealth:

Ottoman to Republic (1923):

- Political institutions transformed radically
- Specific elite individuals changed (Sultan's court eliminated, Christians expelled)
- But ayan who supported nationalism kept land, military officers kept power, wealth concentration persisted
- **Verdict:** Elite adaptation, not transformation

Single-party to multi-party democracy (1950):

- Genuine political opening—competitive elections, opposition parties
- But both major parties elite-led, land reform failed, labor suppressed
- **Verdict:** Political change, economic continuity

Military coups (1960, 1971, 1980):

- Appeared to disrupt elite by overthrowing governments
- But military protected property, crushed labor, maintained capitalism
- Coups prevented elite transformation, not caused it
- **Verdict:** Elite coordination mechanism, not transformation

Neoliberal turn (1980s-1990s):

- Massive economic restructuring—privatization, liberalization, export orientation
- But enriched already-wealthy through asset acquisition, increased inequality
- Workers bore costs through wage cuts, union destruction
- **Verdict:** Elite enrichment through crisis, not transformation

AKP rise (2002):

- New elite fraction (Islamic conservatives) displaced secular Kemalists
- Appeared transformative—different ideology, social base, rhetoric
- But protected property, maintained capitalism, suppressed labor
- Wealth concentration increased during AKP rule
- **Verdict:** Elite fraction competition, not class transformation

The pattern: Every transformation maintained the fundamental structure—concentrated wealth ownership, monopolized violence, controlled information. The forms changed—empire to republic, military to civilian, secular to Islamic—but the functions persisted.

Why Does Elite Power Persist?

The Turkey case study demonstrates several mechanisms enabling elite power to persist across transformations:

1. Control of productive assets: Those who own land, factories, banks, and resources extract surplus from those who work. This relationship persists regardless of political regime. The Ottoman ayan who owned land extracted from peasants. The Republican landowner who owns mechanized farm extracts from wage laborers. The neoliberal CEO who owns corporation extracts from workers. The specific technology and legal forms change, but extraction persists.

2. Violence monopoly enforcement: Elite power ultimately rests on violence capacity. When workers organize to challenge elite power, violence suppresses them (1980 coup). When ethnic minorities resist domination, violence crushes them (Armenian genocide, Kurdish suppressions). When citizens protest autocracy, violence disperses them (Gezi). The violence monopoly ensures challenges from below fail unless they can match state force (which never occurs in Turkey's case).

3. Ideological legitimization: Elite power is more stable when accepted as legitimate rather than imposed purely through force. Ottoman Islam taught hierarchy was divine will. Kemalism taught enlightened vanguard must modernize backward masses. Neoliberalism teaches markets determine worth and inequality reflects merit. AKP Islamism teaches piety and nationalism justify authority. The specific ideologies differ, but all legitimize elite domination.

4. Elite adaptation: Elite who recognize changing circumstances and adapt survive. Ayan who supported Kemal kept land while those loyal to Sultan lost power. Secular businessmen who accommodated AKP maintained wealth while those who opposed faced harassment. Adaptation requires abandoning specific political commitments for deeper commitment to property.

5. Fragmentation of resistance: Workers and peasants are fragmented by ethnicity (Turks vs. Kurds), religion (Sunnis vs. Alevis), geography (urban vs. rural), and sector (formal vs. informal). This fragmentation prevents unified challenges to elite power. When labor organized in 1970s, it was crushed before building durable cross-sector solidarity.

6. International context: Elite power is reinforced by global capitalism. Foreign capital invests in Turkey, creating dependency that prevents radical redistribution (capital flight threat). IMF and international institutions promote neoliberal policies benefiting capital. NATO and Western alliance support Turkish state (despite democratic backsliding) for geopolitical reasons. Elite power is embedded in global structures, not just domestic.

Contemporary Turkey (2025): Continuity and Transformation

Turkey today exhibits both change and continuity:

What has changed:

- Political regime: Presidential system replacing parliamentary, Erdoğan's personalist rule
- Elite fractions: Islamic conservatives dominating over secular Kemalists

- Geopolitical alignment: Shifting from pure Western alignment toward more independent foreign policy
- Urbanization: 93% urban (vs. 25% in 1923), fundamentally different society
- Technology: Digital economy, internet, modern infrastructure vs. pre-industrial Ottoman Empire
- Life expectancy: 78 years (vs. 35-40 in 1923), dramatic health improvements
- Literacy: 96%+ (vs. 10-15% in 1923), educated population

What persists:

- Wealth concentration: Top 1% control 50-55% of wealth, comparable to late Ottoman concentration
- Violence monopoly: State uses overwhelming force against resistance (Kurds, opposition, protesters)
- Information control: Most media pro-government, journalists imprisoned, censorship extensive
- Labor subordination: Unions weak, strikes prohibited in many sectors, workers lack power
- Ethnic domination: Kurdish identity suppressed, Armenian genocide denied, minorities subordinated
- Elite impunity: Wealth and connections protect from consequences while poor face harsh punishment

The fundamental structure:

- Small elite (perhaps 5-10% of population) control:
    - 70%+ of wealth through ownership of land, corporations, banks
    - State power through control of presidency, parliament, judiciary, military
    - Violence through police, military, intelligence services
    - Information through media ownership, censorship, prosecution of critics
- Large majority (90-95%) are:
    - Workers (formal and informal) earning wages insufficient for comfortable life
    - Unemployed or underemployed, especially youth
    - Small business owners struggling under oligopoly conditions
    - Peasants (declining but still existing) working small plots or as agricultural laborers
    - Refugees and minorities facing discrimination and exploitation

Assessment: Turkey is wealthier, more developed, more urbanized, and more connected than Ottoman Empire. But the fundamental power structure—elite dominance maintained through control of productive assets and state violence—persists. The specific elite changed (Ottoman dynasties → Republican military → AKP Islamists), but elite power as class phenomenon persisted.

The Answer: 726 Years of Elite Adaptation

The Ottoman elite who controlled wealth, violence, and information did not disappear when the empire collapsed. They did not get replaced by entirely new classes. Instead, they **adapted**—those who embraced nationalism over imperialism, who aligned with Kemal over the Sultan, who accepted secularism over Caliphate, who supported neoliberalism over étatism, who accommodated AKP over resisting, all survived and prospered.

Across 726 years (1299-2025):

- **26 sultans** ruled the Ottoman Empire
- The empire expanded from beylik to intercontinental power
- The empire declined, lost territories, and collapsed
- **The Republic emerged** through war and genocide
- **12 presidents** have governed the Republic
- **Three military coups** overthrew civilian governments
- **Economic models shifted** from feudalism to mercantilism to étatism to import substitution to neoliberalism
- **Political systems changed** from absolutism to constitutional monarchy to single-party dictatorship to multi-party democracy to military regimes to Islamic populism to presidential autocracy
- **Ideologies transformed** from Islamic imperialism to Kemalist nationalism to conservative democracy to Islamist populism

Yet through every transformation:

- Roughly 5-10% controlled 60-80% of wealth
- The state monopolized violence and used it to suppress resistance
- Information was controlled to prevent challenging ideologies from spreading
- Workers and peasants remained subordinate to elite

This is not unique to Turkey. The comparative cases in our framework—England, Japan, Sweden, Germany—all demonstrate similar patterns. Elite adapt to changing circumstances while maintaining control of productive assets and state power. The specific mechanisms vary by national context, but the pattern is universal.

The lesson: Elite power in complex societies does not depend on specific political institutions, ideologies, or even individual elite members. It depends on **ownership of productive assets** and **control of organized violence**. As long as these remain concentrated, political transformations can be absorbed and adapted to. Revolutionary changes in political form can coexist with fundamental continuity in economic power and social hierarchy.

Turkey from 1299-2025 demonstrates this perfectly: 726 years of dramatic transformations—from frontier beylik to intercontinental empire to collapsing empire to secular

republic to Islamic democracy to personalist autocracy—all while maintaining elite dominance over subordinate classes through control of wealth, violence, and information.

The Ottoman elite adapted. The Republican elite adapted. The contemporary Turkish elite are adapting. The pattern continues.

TURKEY CASE STUDY COMPLETE

Total Coverage: 1299-2025 (726 years)

- Part 1: Ottoman foundations and classical period (1299-1876)
- Part 2: Decline, Young Turks, genocide, Republic emergence (1876-1923)
- Part 3: Single-party rule, democracy, military coups, neoliberalism (1923-1980)
- Part 4: Özal, AKP, Erdoğan, contemporary autocracy (1980-2025)

The Answer: Elite adapted through every transformation—Ottoman → Republic → Democracy → Coups → Neoliberalism → Islamic Populism → Autocracy. The three monopolies (wealth, violence, information) persisted across 726 years despite political revolutions, regime changes, economic restructuring, and ideological transformations.

Contemporary Turkey (2025): Top 1% control 50-55% of wealth, Gini coefficient 0.62-0.65, violence monopoly absolute, information heavily controlled—elite power persists in new forms.

THEMATIC BIBLIOGRAPHY: TURKEY CASE STUDY (1299-2025)

Ottoman Empire to Modern Turkey: Elite Power Across 726 Years

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NOTE ON SOURCES

This bibliography represents the types of scholarly sources that inform the analysis presented in the Turkey case study. The case study itself is a synthesis drawing on established historiography and social science research. Sources are organized thematically to correspond with the major sections of the case study rather than alphabetically. This organization reflects

how different bodies of scholarship contribute to understanding elite power continuity across transformations.

The bibliography emphasizes works that provide:

- Quantitative data on wealth concentration, land ownership, and inequality
- Documentation of state violence and repression
- Analysis of information control and ideological systems
- Economic histories showing extraction mechanisms
- Social histories documenting lived experiences of subordinate classes

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CONCLUSION

This bibliography represents major scholarly works informing the analysis of elite power continuity in Turkey from 1299 to 2025. The emphasis on economic histories, social histories, and political economy reflects the case study's focus on the three monopolies (wealth, violence, information) and their concentration across regime transformations.

Notable gaps in available scholarship include:

- Comprehensive quantitative data on wealth concentration for Ottoman period (fragmentary sources)
- Systematic studies of post-1980 wealth inequality (data often proprietary or restricted)
- Full accounting of 1980 coup victims (state records remain partially classified)
- Complete documentation of village destructions in Kurdish regions (ongoing classification)

Future research would benefit from:

- Greater access to state archives for sensitive periods
- Systematic wealth surveys across longer time periods
- Oral histories from subordinate classes (workers, peasants, minorities)
- Comparative analysis with similar cases (Russia, Iran, Egypt)

The case study synthesizes this diverse scholarship to demonstrate a central thesis: elite power persists across dramatic regime transformations when elite (old or new) maintain control of productive assets and organized violence, regardless of political forms or ideologies.

Total Sources Listed: 150+ **Organization:** Thematic by period and topic **Languages:** Primarily English with some Turkish sources noted **Time Span Covered:** 1299-2025 (726 years)

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This case study is part of the collection *Patterns of Power: Systematic Analysis of Elite Control Mechanisms Across Civilizations*